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CONTENTS

06 **20 QUESTIONS**
with gorgeous Halle Berry

12 **PICTORIAL**
PENTHELISA

20 **OPINION**
DR Strange. For the love of politics

26 **PICTORIAL**
ISABELLE MILLER

34 **GALLERY**
Art or Pleasure? Explore free form art

44 **COVER**
JEN COLE

52 **PLAYBOY INTERVIEW**
Chilling with the king Kanye West

64 **PICTORIAL**
AMBER BERNARD

72 **STAY IN. GET OFF**
Confessions of a cam girl

76 **PLAYBOY INTERVIEW**
Erica Jong. We salute the legend

86 **PICTORIAL**
MIRANDA FOUNTAIN

94 **CIVIL LIBERTIES**
Is weed law racist?

ON THE COVER
JEN COLE
Photography by Rosanna Faraci
No 39 | **March 2021**

44

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20Q

HALLE BERRY

Hollywood's freshest face speaks out on insulting rap lyrics and recreational swearing, and warns Robin Givens not to pick a fight

Halle Berry, the 25-year-old Cleveland-born actress and former beauty pageant contestant, knows how to leave a lasting impression. She brought an earthbound sweetness to Strictly Business and The Last Boy Scout and straight-backed dignity to the six-hour miniseries Queen. For Spike Lee's Jungle Fever, she gave a rancid-mouthed crackhead some dimension. In Boomerang, Berry turned her third-lead, nice-girl art director into an impressive scene-stealer.

Now Berry is taking off in another direction, showing up as Rosetta Stone, a slithering, prehistoric temptress in Universal's The Flintstones, co-starring John Goodman and Elizabeth Taylor. Midway through the shoot, we sent writer Margy Rochlin to speak with Berry at her West Hollywood hotel room: g"The first thing Halle did," says Rochlin, "was offer me a weak handshake and admit that the idea of a long interview made her nervous. Then she threw herself down on her white couch and blabbed for the next two hours. She kept pleading, g'If you get bored, just tell me.' She never gave me a reason to."

Q1: *In order to prepare for your role as a crack addict in Jungle Fever, you didn't bathe for 10 days. What is the upside of skipping your morning shower?*
BERRY: It was a freeing experience. We are so civilized. We have to be clean and smell nice and look pretty. It was refreshing just to let myself go and not care.

I dread getting up in the morning and taking a shower, putting on makeup and fixing my hair. With that role, I could just pop out of bed, have my breakfast and go. I didn't even brush my teeth. You know how you get those little razor bumps when you shave under your arms too much? I didn't have that. And when I finally did shave, it was like a baby's bottom under my arms. I was showing everybody: p"Look how pretty my underarms are!"
Q2: *Did a different sort of guy start following you home?*
BERRY: The bums! [Laughs] The bums were like, m"Hey, baby, you're looking pretty good." It was funny because I'd actually talk to them. Some of them are crazy; they really need to be in a mental institution. But others really do have something to say. They're just down on their luck.
Q3: *We know about the straw, blue, rasp and cran. What distinguishes the Halleberry?*
BERRY: The Halleberry is a very sweet berry, and that's important. Being sweet and nice to people goes a long, long way.
Q4: *When can a lady use four-letter words?*
BERRY: When I'm really in the mood or pissed off, I can curse with the best of them. That is so much a part of me. But I curse only when I'm with my friends—I don't do it in public. In Jungle Fever, I could do and say whatever I wanted because I was that character. I could say m"Fuck everybody!" I had all these fantasies that I would tell Spike to fuck himself. But I never did.
Q5: *What's something that your husband, Atlanta Braves outfielder David Justice, doesn't appreciate about you that a movie director would?*
BERRY: That I cry a lot. When I cry my husband sometimes doesn't react like there's a woman crying but says, g"Come on, stop crying." If I didn't cry all the time, maybe he'd be more frantic like he's supposed to be. But I'm just real emotional. I cry when I'm mad, I cry when I'm sad, I cry when I'm happy. I cry a lot. Except when I'm doing a film. When they say "cry," all of a sudden I get dry.
Q6: *What do you do when you go to the ballpark and your husband goes 0 for 4?*
BERRY: I couldn't care less. I love him no matter what he's batting. But I feel bad for him because I know he's going to feel really down about it. He's going to take the heat from the press, from the fans. I hurt for him.

But I don't go to the games anymore unless they're All-Star or playoff games. Now I watch them on TV. Whenever I was home, I would always go to the stadium and sit there and be a good wife. But I get so frustrated when he's not having a good day. I hear people saying, p"Justice, you suck!" "Trade him!" Or he'll come up to bat and they'll say, "This time try to hit something besides air!" I take it personally. He's my baby, and I just don't like it. If I weren't Halle Berry, I would go off on some of those people. I feel like saying, "Hey, buddy, can you hit a ball going 95 miles an hour? Then shut the fuck up!" That is the ultimate fantasy.
Q7: *How did you make your peace with baseball?*
BERRY: I had to make a real effort at first. Those games are long. At my first baseball game, I was ready to go after an hour. Once I started to learn about the game—the intricate parts of it, the pitches, the plays, how to keep score—that made the time go by. Now I can sit through a three-hour game and think, Wow, where did the time go?

"I dread getting up in the morning and taking a shower, putting on makeup and fixing my hair."

BY **MARGY ROCHLIN**

PHOTO BY **GWENDOLEN CATES**

Q8: *You were first attracted to your husband when you spotted him on MTV. If someone hadn't hooked you up, what would have been your next move?*
BERRY: I had it all planned out, which is kind of sick. I was in South Carolina making Queen, and I was going to have my sister go with me to a Braves game. I was going to come up with some reason why I had to go down into the tunnel. I mean, I wasn't going to come on to him. I had just gotten over a really bad relationship and I had banned men for at least a year.

But I just knew that if I could look him in the face, he'd fall in love with me and I'd fall in love with him.

I'd already started to go through the motions. I found out when the team was going to be in Atlanta and I tried to plan my flight. Then all of a sudden it hit me: No man's going to want a woman this desperate. I'm going to look like an asshole.

Then, two weeks later a guy called me from one of the Cincinnati papers to interview me. At the end he said, p"You know, I've never done this before, but I have a really good friend who absolutely adores you and would love an autographed picture." I said, "Who?" And he said, "David Justice of the Atlanta Braves." I dropped the phone on the floor. I said, "Give him my phone number instead of an autograph." So an hour later David called me and we talked for three hours. We hit it off like [*snaps fingers*] that.
Q9: *Given the relative sexiness of baseball players, why did you go after a power hitter rather than a relief pitcher?*
BERRY: Pitchers can look just like regular guys—short and kind of scrawny. Power hitters generally have better bodies and butts. They're stronger.
Q10: *You've been a lustful reference in at least one rap song. Is this something you support or condone?*
BERRY: I have a real problem with all those songs that refer to women as bitches or in other derogatory terms. I don't listen to them, nor do I buy them, nor do I encourage others to. People I know say, g"Well, I don't listen to the words, I like the beat." They don't realize that subconsciously they're hearing the words. It's degrading. As women, we're fighting so hard to be viewed in another way. I don't like my name associated with it. I know they think they're giving me a compliment, but I don't see it that way.
Q11: *In 1985 you were Miss Teen All American. In 1986 you were first runner-up for Miss USA. As the veteran of many beauty pageants, tell us: What makes a bad loser and what makes a bad winner?*
BERRY: After the pageant, the bad loser will go around bad-mouthing everything. She'll put down the girl who won: g"Look at her—she has fake tits! She has acne!" Just being obnoxious. She can't get over the fact that she lost: "Hello? You didn't win, goodbye, go home now."

A bad winner? I know this after judging pageants: During the interview these girls give their perfect pageant answers: p"Yes, I'd like to save the world." Then afterward at the dinner with the winners, these girls turn into total snobs. They've already used you and abused you and gotten what they wanted out of you—the crown. Then they're like monsters.
Q12: *How did your more highbrow colleagues respond to the news that you'd signed on for The Flintstones?*
BERRY: It's amazing how people can be so negative. Some people have said to me, g"The Flintstones? That's a cartoon. I thought you wanted to be a serious actor. You just did Queen. I mean, Halle!"

But not everything's going to be Queen or Malcolm X. This film was really important to me because to be a black woman and to be the object of everybody's desire in this movie is such a coup. The fact that these executives at the studio, who are all white males, took the risk to have a black woman as this character says a lot as to where we're going. No, we don't want to be just sex objects or be just beautiful. But the level of consciousness is being raised, and that's important to me. We're starting to be seen a little bit differently.
Q13: *You haven't shown your revealing Flintstones costume to your husband. To soften the blow, are you going to give him an exclusive preview?*
BERRY: No! He'll just see it on premiere night, if he can. He worries a lot about that kind of thing. I'd cause him a year of undue stress if I involved him with it. He's read things like, g"She hasn't shown her husband," so he's like, "Well, what is it?" But sometimes the less he knows, the better. When it comes out, he'll see it. He'll see that it is what it is.
Q14: *"It" is?*
BERRY: Very bare. A long fake-fur skirt with those jagged edges and a split all the way up the side. The top is tight, very pushy-uppy. Thin straps, barely there. It's like a bikini. But more than actually seeing the costume, it's what I do in the costume that makes it even worse. I seduce Fred. I slither around, crawl over desks and use everything I have to get him entranced—which I do pretty much throughout the whole movie. He's putty in my hands.
Q15: *No matter what film you're in, you're always the one who receives the kudos. Are your co-stars wary or curious about such a record?*
BERRY: Hmm. Did you read my reviews for Queen? There were a few that really hit me hard. The harshest thing somebody said was that I didn't have the emotional range or capacity that this character needed. I thought, Say a lot of things, but I don't think that's true. I'm the most emotional person I know. They could have said other things—that I was stoic or stiff—but not that I don't have the emotional range.

I've learned not to take it personally. But it's hard. I gave my blood, sweat and tears for that role. I was working with a broken tailbone, in pain. So when someone just uses a stroke of the pen to dismiss what I've worked so hard at, it's disheartening.
Q16: *Is it easier for a film critic to like the work of someone who might actually be a nice person in real life?*
BERRY: Yes, that certainly was the case with me and Robin Givens in Boomerang. People thought I played myself and she played herself. Robin has gotten such bad press because of what she did to

Mike Tyson. So many people in the business think she's bitchy. People won't feel sympathetic toward her until she starts doing nice things in her personal life and people start writing about it. The image you portray is important. People ultimately have to like you to pay seven bucks to see you in a film.

Q17: *Every woman of the Nineties needs a method of self-defense. Have you ever been in a fight? If so, who won?*

BERRY: Oh, yeah. Not in my adult life, since I'm now old enough to know better. Growing up I would get beat up a lot. I'm passive. I don't like confrontation. So sometimes people would pick on me because they knew I wouldn't fight back. But sometimes I'd stand up for myself, and I would end up in a fight. And, usually, I would get beat up—but only because it would be three or four of them and one of me. It made me stronger. If I ever fought one-on-one, I'd probably kick somebody's ass because I'm used to fighting four at a time. If I ever got into a fight with Robin Givens, I'd probably kill her. [*Laughs*]

Q18: *Let's focus on another of your daring adventures in role preparation: Before you played an exotic dancer in The Last Boy Scout, you paid the owner of a club to let you dance in a bikini top and G-string. What's the view from the perspective of a stripper?*

BERRY: It's a bunch of drooling, drunk men looking up your underpants. Nothing against the girls who do it, but it was humiliating for me. You're just a thing. They're saying things to you.

Q19: *What comments did you appreciate? And what should have been left unsaid?*

BERRY: I didn't appreciate any of them—until I was walking out and one of the guys said to me, g"Sweetheart, you don't belong here. Get out."

Q20: *As a teenager you worked in clothing stores. What life lessons did you pick up while behind the cash register?*

BERRY: When I worked in retail, the customer was always right. No matter what they do or what they think, the customer is always right. They forget that out here in Hollywood.

Penthesilea

Instagram **@model_penthesilea_**

Photography by **Sander Seemann | @sandershotme**
PR by **LSA Management | @leo.alderman @lsapublications**
Agency **@lsamodels**

Penthesilea is a famous Dutch model, who has appeared on many covers, with her exotic looks we understand why. We're smitted with her beauty.

Such an honour to have a gorgeous and talented beauty feature! We're curious to know how your journey has been as one of the most respected models in your industry. Thank you. I've been extremely lucky with all the success I have being a model. I'm really blessed.

Given your obvious stunning good looks and striking features, tell us a bit about where you're from? My parents are from Venezuela, both are mixed race. I was born and raised in The Netherlands.

Tell us something surprising about you? Most people are really surprised that I love to clean, I'm totally obsessed with cleaning.

2020 was an incredibly challenging for all us, what would say has been the most challenging thing for you thus far? To be honest I don't really think 2020 was that hard, yes, we were limited, but it wasn't the end of the world. I'm a really postive person and I try to make the best out of every situation.

What are some of the things you like to do, behind the cameras and all the glitz and glamour? I love to spend time with loved ones and my two fury babies. I love shopping, dining, traveling. One of my hobbies is sleeping and cleaning, a bit strange I know haha.

If we were to try and sweep you right off your feet, what are some of the things you look for in an ideal partner? Oehhh good one, be yourself, don't try to hard. I'm impressed with well mannered, super hygienic men, who can communicate.

..And what would make you go running in the opposite direction as fast as possible? Narcissistic, manipulating, lying, selfish men.

You're a seemingly talented lady, what are some, if any, of your hidden talents not many people know about? To be honest I don't have a hidden talent hahaha...

What makes you feel sexy? Sexy lingerie, heels or my boyfriend ;)

If you could have any superpower in the world, what would it be and why? Be invisible, so I can spy on people lol.

What can we expect from you this year? Any major plans and exciting things we can look forward to from you? There is so much coming up, but it's all a secret.

It has been a true pleasure getting to know you! Any final words for our readers out there? Thank you all for your support and if you don't want to miss out on anything, give me a follow on Instagram.

Or: How our White House correspondent realized he would never learn to stop worrying and love Trump

There's something new at the White House.

At least the president and some in the press say there's a new "tone" at the White House, where things are, as usual, in a constant state of flux.

Don't be fooled.

Once the center of the civilized world and a symbol of democracy, the White House now resembles a basement flood of fetid sewage where the brave, the foolish and the incompetent go to slowly drown.

The members of the White House press pool enjoy the perceived privilege of witnessing this crap on a daily basis, but it's like watching Slim Pickens ride a nuclear bomb to its detonation in Dr. Strangelove. Most of the reporters who didn't get to ask Trump questions before the pandemic put them center stage certainly seem as enthusiastic as Major T.J. Kong, Pickens's character—although many of their questions are tepid. But the results for the Republic could be just as dire as Kong's finish.

In this time of supposedly changing tone, the shock troops sent by Trump to defend federal property have been recorded shooting rubber bullets at protesting mothers, pushing people to the ground and tear-gassing protesters for no discernible reason. The videos and images have been widely shared. As several congressmen said Tuesday during a House Judiciary Committee hearing with Attorney General Bill Barr, it is apparent the federal government is putting property ahead of people.

Thus, the violence increases. Trump seems to enjoy the talking points about defending buildings while beating the populace into submission.

The thought is sickening. It shows the president's tone hasn't changed; now he's trying to change the tone of the nation to one of submissive fealty.

This Tuesday, after the White House press staff called a lunch "lid" (a break during which they would announce no news), I took the opportunity to walk up the street to a sub shop that had recently reopened its doors. Still unable to eat inside the restaurant and not actually pining to do so—I walked to a stone bench outside the Eisenhower Executive Office Building to enjoy my iced tea and half sandwich

Luckily the bench was shaded from the sun. The D.C. summers are the stuff of legend. Rumor has it hell sends its hardest cases to suffer through the city's dog days of August thus explaining congressmen, senators and every lobbyist in the area.

As soon as I sat down a sparrow landed nearby, strolled leisurely to within a foot of me and cocked its head as if to say, "Where's my cut?"

This is D.C. after all.

So I tossed the sparrow a few bread crumbs. Seconds later three more landed, and soon I looked like the old lady in Disney's 1964 Mary Poppins, feeding scores of birds by ridding myself of most of the bread from my sandwich. A couple of needy squirrels tried to hustle me too, but I managed to extricate myself from the situation without being robbed. I can't always say the same when I deal with the White House or Congress.

An armed Secret Service agent pulling duty at the northwest gate laughed when he saw me. We both agreed that with the absence of people working in downtown D.C. due to the coronavirus, the resident nonhuman vermin were having a tough time finding enough to eat.

That is not too different from people in the United States who are suffering because of the economy, the pandemic and Trump's activities as president. They're struggling to survive. The president, when questioned about any of his actions on these fronts, flashes his teeth like a wild animal. He tweeted on Monday: "So disgusting to watch Twitter's so-called 'Trending', where sooo many trends are about me, and never a good one. They look for anything they can find, make it as bad as possible, and blow it up, trying to make it trend. Really ridiculous, illegal, and, of course, very unfair!"

So much for a new tone.

leading to the inevitable question: How screwed is this country if Trump is reelected?

Before he became president, Trump was laughed off as a buffoon – a cartoon figure telling people they were fired on national television. He was unwatchable then. But he's far more dangerous now that he's in the Oval Office.

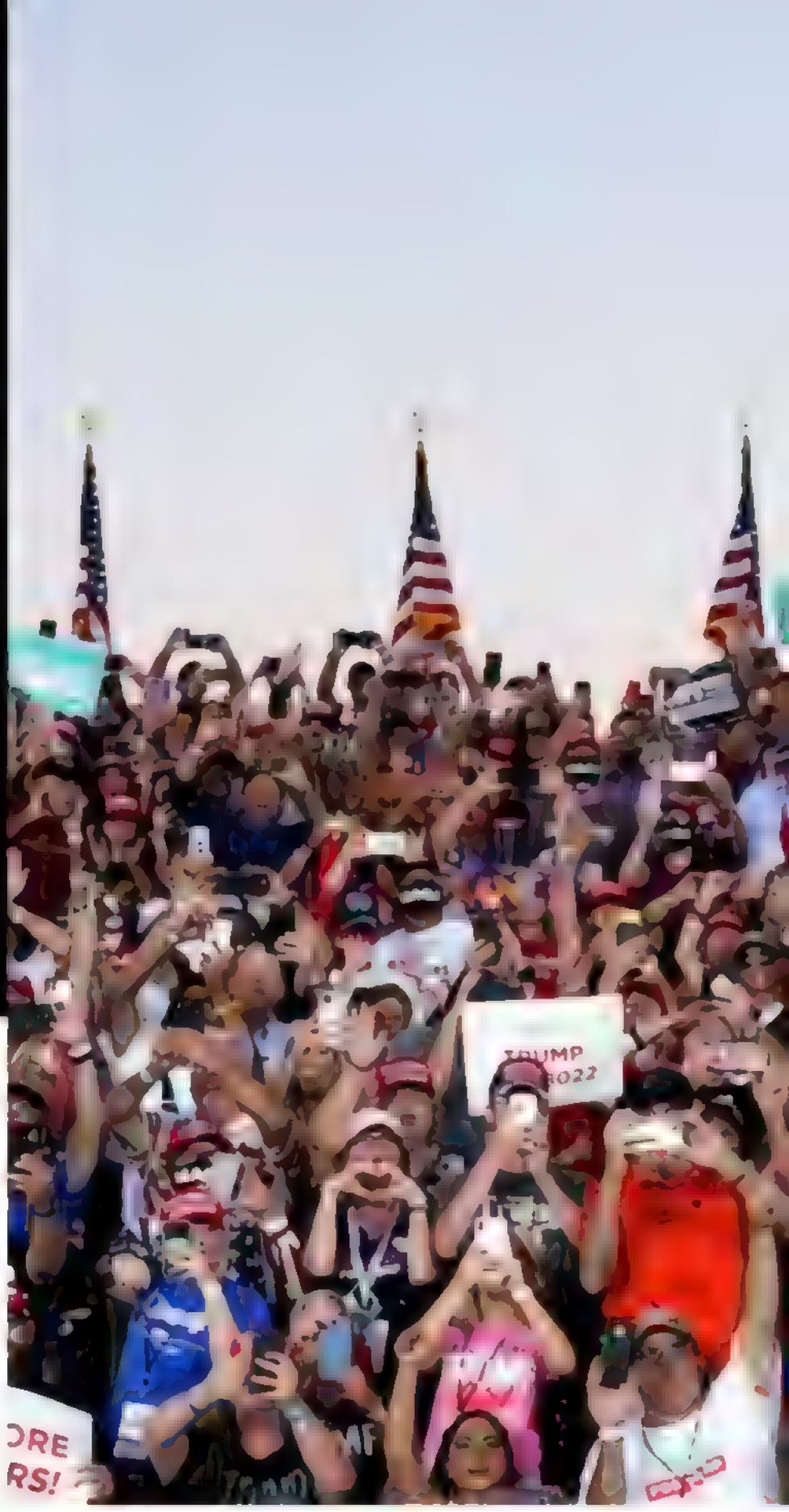
On three different occasions President Trump has released information regarding his physical health. Information on his mental health, however, has been released only once, in January 2018, when Dr. Ronny Jackson's three-page report on Trump's first annual physical as president included a single paragraph of neurological assessment. "Examination of cranial nerves, cerebellar function, deep tendon reflexes, motor function and sensory system all normal. Cognitive Screening Exam using the Montreal Cognitive Assessment was normal with a score of 30 30," he wrote

Jackson walked confidently into the Brady Briefing Room on January 16, 2018 with this evaluation, and then for more than an hour the White House physician unleashed on the press compliment after compliment to Trump's physical and mental health.

"I've gotten to know him pretty well. And I had absolutely no concerns about his cognitive ability or his, you know, his neurological functions," Jackson told reporters. He said he hadn't initially planned to administer a screening for neurological impairments but did so at Trump's request.

More than a year later, on February 14, 2019, the White House issued a one-page statement in which Dr. Sean P. Conley said Trump's weight was 243 pounds (it had been 239 pounds a year earlier). His resting heart rate was 70 beats per minute versus 68 per minute in 2018. His blood pressure in 2018 had been 122/74 (slightly elevated) and in 2019 it was 118/80. Conley made no specific mention of Trump's cognitive function, noticeably leaving out any assessment of that in his broader evaluation: "There were no findings of significance or changes to report on his physical exam."

On November 16, 2019, then press secretary Stephanie Grisham issued a rare statement about Trump's health after he took an unplanned trip to the Walter Reed National Military Medical Center. "Anticipating a very busy 2020, the president is taking advantage of a free



weekend here in Washington, D.C., to begin portions of his routine annual physical exam at Walter Reed," she said.

Speculation was rampant about possible mental or physical problems, including a minor stroke, a heart attack or something else, but the White House press office gave no further comment, and despite repeated questions from myself and other reporters, the door to more insight on the president's health remained closed.

Finally in early March 2020, during one of those pre-pandemic South Lawn helicopter departures wherein Trump routinely held court, I hit him up and asked when he would finish his physical

"I'm going probably over the next 90 days," Trump told me before heading to a campaign rally in North Carolina. He hadn't made it back to Walter Reed since his November visit because he'd been "so busy."

Busy? He certainly hadn't missed many golf dates from November through March 2, when I asked the question, but I was told by his staff that was irrelevant

Finally on June 3 the White House again released a one-page update on Trump's health. It was even shorter than the 2019 report. Trump's weight was at 244. His resting heart rate was a mere 63 beats per minute and his blood pressure was 121/79.

"Upon review of systems and physical exam, there were no findings of significance or changes to report," Conley wrote.

No other comment was given for the record. On background I was told the president had not undergone additional cognitive testing and that he was "just fine."

That leads us to Trump's recent interview with Fox News medical contributor Dr. Marc Siegel. "Probably a year ago, a little less than a year ago, I asked a doctor, I said, 'Is there some kind of a cognitive test I could take?' Because I've been hearing about it. Because I want to shut these people up. They're fake news. They make up stories," Trump told Siegel.

Trump acknowledged the doctor in question was Ronny Jackson. The test was the Montreal Cognitive Assessment, but Trump didn't take it a year ago or less than a year ago. He took it two and a half years ago. And Trump's story about asking to take the test had already been told by Jackson back in 2018.

"If you're in the office of the presidency, we have to be sharp," Trump told Siegel. But Trump couldn't remember the name of the test, apparently forgot (or lied about) when he took it and claimed the first questions—like identifying various animals were easy, while some of the later questions were more difficult.

The president didn't appear sharp this Tuesday when NPR's Tamara Keith asked him why he had canceled a meeting with pharmaceutical companies. He told her he thought the meeting was set for the following day. Trump appeared slow, lethargic and overwhelmed. He left the briefing in a hurry after answering a question

"If you're in the office of the presidency, we have to be sharp," Trump said. But he couldn't remember the name of the test.

from CNN's Kaitlan Collins regarding his recent tweet backing a doctor who said that DNA from space aliens is being used in medical treatments.

He ignored me when I asked him when he was going to stop lying to us or do something about Russian bounties on American soldiers.

Evidence points to major concerns about Trump's cognitive abilities, in addition to ongoing concerns about his ability to tell the truth, leading to the inevitable question: How screwed is this country if Trump is reelected?

He said on Tuesday he thinks people just don't like his personality, and that's why he doesn't get higher ratings for his efforts against the pandemic.

There are more than 4 million coronavirus cases in the U.S. with more than 150,000 dead. And the president thinks it's about his personality.

That's his new tone at the White House. Second verse, same as the first.

ISABELLE *Miller*

Photography by **Ryan Dwyer | @letshoot**
PR Services **@mainstreetproductions**
HMUA **Bridget Martinez | @bridgetzglam**

Such an honour to have a gorgeous and talented beauty feature! We're curious to know how your journey has been as one of the most respected models in your industry? It is my pleasure to be featured in your magazine, thank you for having me. My modeling journey has been fantastic, as I have had the opportunity to travel around the world, shoot with amazing photographers, collaborate with great content creators, and connect with my amazing fanbase that supports and encourages me everyday across the world.

Given your obvious stunning good looks and striking features, tell us a bit about where you're from? Great question! I am originally from Togo and Cape-Verde; two beautiful countries in West Africa. I spent most of my life in the United-States, and now call California home.

Tell us something surprising about you? As tall as I look on camera, I am only 5'1"(155 cm), haha! People are often surprised to see how petite I look in person.

2020 was an incredibly challenging for all us, what would say has been the most challenging thing for you thus far? 2020 has been an extremely difficult year for many. My biggest challenges were seeing my friends' health being affected by COVID, and being isolated from my closed ones.

What are some of the things you like to do, behind the cameras and all the glitz and glamour? Behind all the glitz and glamour, I live a pretty laid back lifestyle. I go to the beach, explore new cities, and watch documentaries.

If we were to try and sweep you right off your feet, what are some of the things you look for in an ideal partner? Haha! Very good question! Some of things I look for in an ideal partner is purpose, wisdom, self-awareness, optimism, and conscientiousness.

..And what would make you go running in the opposite direction as fast as possible? Ha! Now what would make me go the other way would be closed mindedness, short term thinking, laziness, lack of curiosity and perspective, and lack of purpose. someone who doesn't know what they want for themselves.

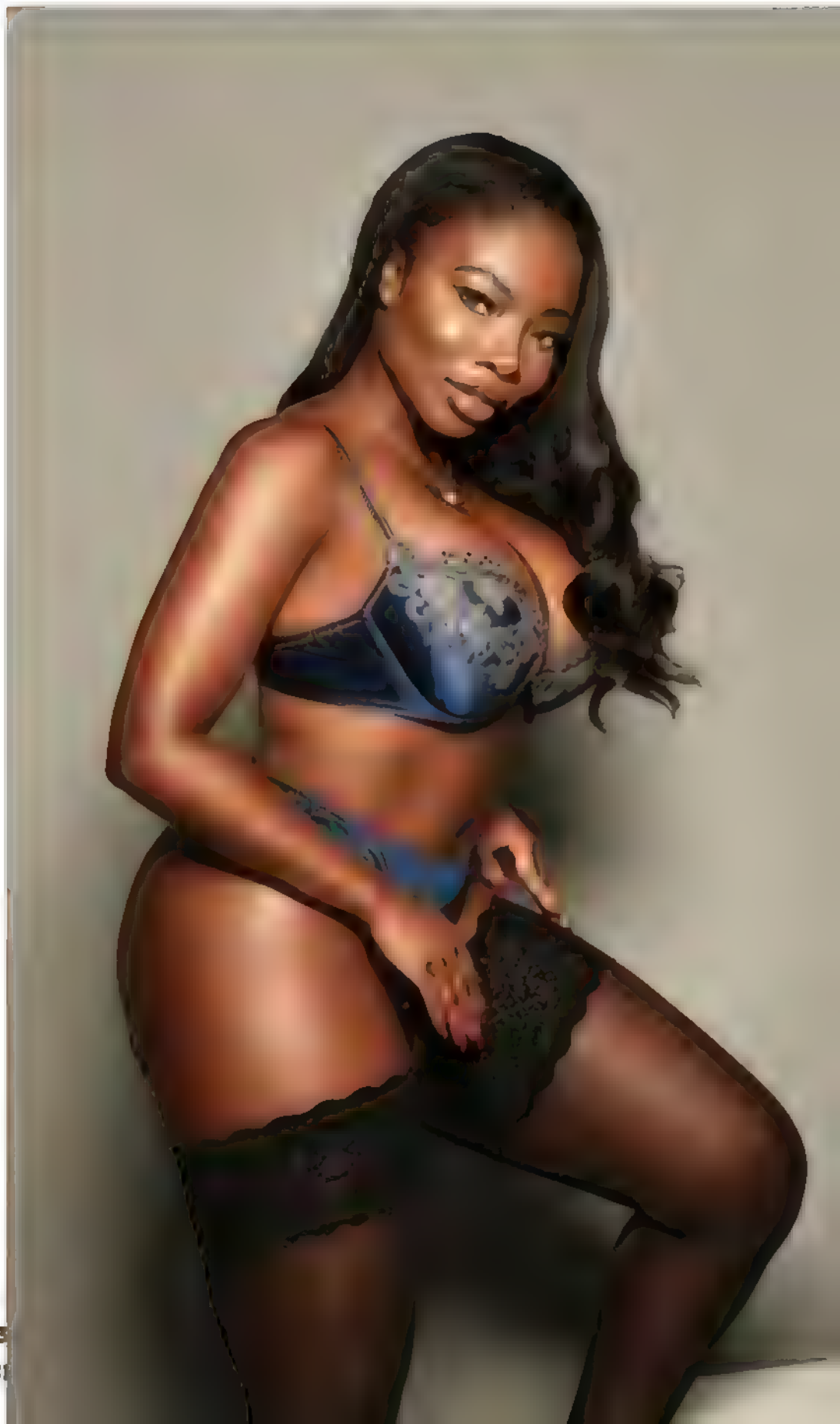
You're a seemingly talented lady, what are some, if any, of your hidden talents not many people know about? One talent few people know about is my ability to draw fine art portraits in dry mediums (pencil,charcoal, etc.)

What makes you feel sexy? Lingerie, without hesitation. :-)

If you could have any superpower in the world, what would it be and why? One superpower I'd love to have is the ability to predict the future under different scenarios and circumstances so humanity can make better decisions for ourselves and our environment.

What can we expect from you this year? Any major plans and exciting things we can look forward to from you? My feature in your magazine and my upcoming YouTube Channel are the biggest ones. Other than that I highly encourage you to stay tuned for more.

It has been a true pleasure getting to know you, any last words for our readers? Thank you so much Playboy Australia, it was my pleasure. I'm looking forward to connecting with you again in the future.



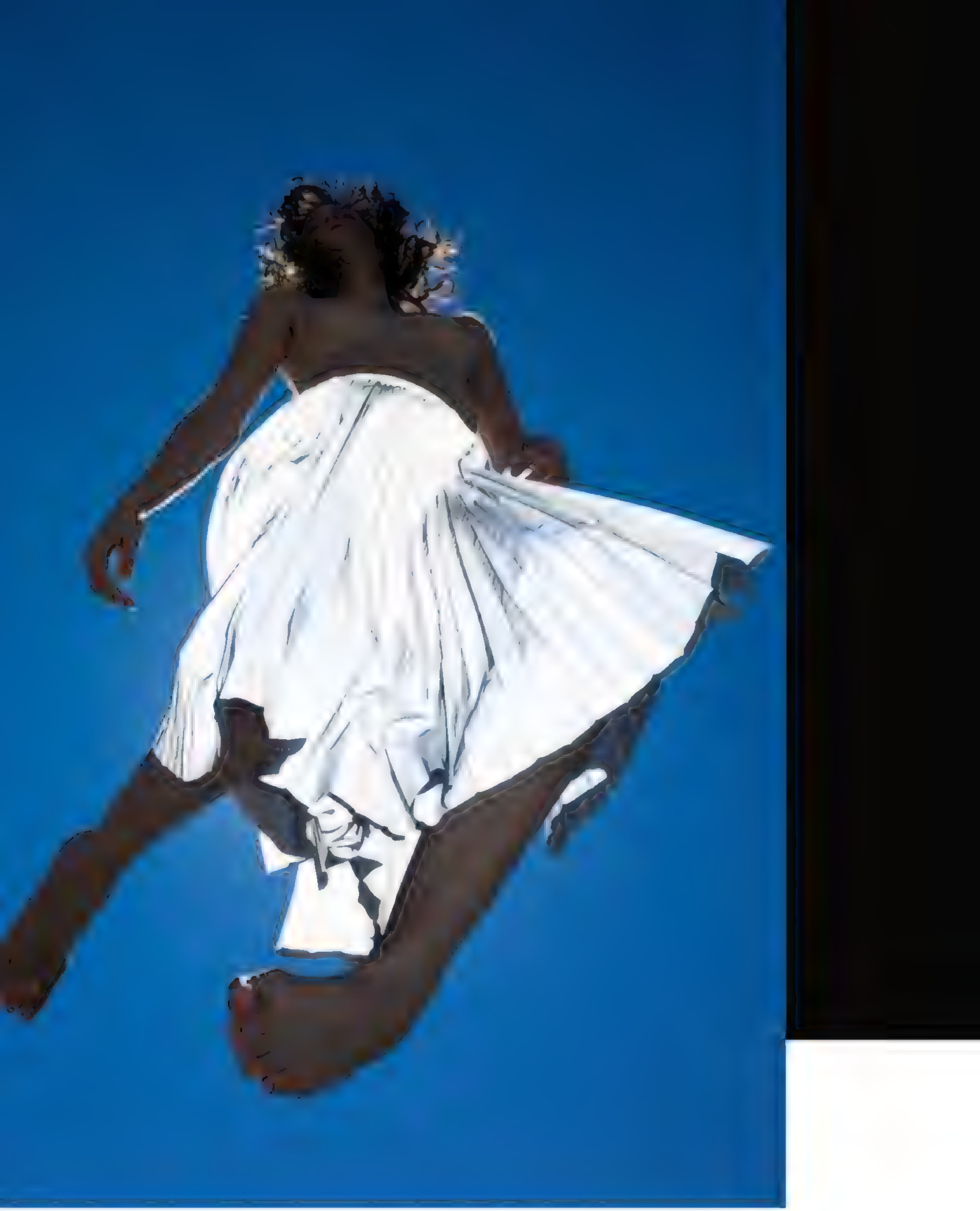
Free

FORM

A Pictorial by Blaise Cepis

The open sky and the female form—a soaring study featuring Maggie White, Jorlenne Caraballo, Ndeye Magne Ndiaye and Priscilla Bass

PHOTOGRAPHY BY
BLAISE CEPIS



Flirting

with

Jennifer McCoy

by Jason Fleetwood

Model **@jenfitmccoy | MachineSupplements.com**

Photography by **Shannon Fontaine | @shannonfontaine | NashvilleFitnessPhoto.com**
HMUA **Bethany Turner | @eyecandybg**
Agency **Ellen Duffer | @ellen.duffer**

This month we meet Jennifer McCoy, a blonde beauty with the smile of an angel and the body of a goddess. She is strong, smart, and making big moves in the fitness industry with her unique approach to business and her pure talent in front of the camera! Take it from us, Jennifer is much more than she seems and here she shares what she's all about, her goals for the future and why she reminds us so much of Baywatch! Take a look.

Thank you for taking time out of your schedule to speak to us. Firstly, you look amazing Jennifer. Could you tell us what got you started on your journey towards becoming a glam and fitness model and what does appearing in Playboy mean to you? Being a playboy playmate is such an honor for me, especially at this time of my life. It's a dream come true for a lot of girls. I hope it is an inspiration for women my age to keep feeling sexy and to do what makes you happy! My hope is that the example I've set for other women is to stay healthy, stay positive, believe in yourself and have confidence. Confidence is the sexiest thing a woman could have and you should never be afraid to be sexy!

Out of interest, we see you mention things like Health Works Nutrition and Machine supplements a lot, could you tell us a bit more about that? I believe the hard times in my life are what fuels me to stay in great shape. I'm determined to make the most of every day! Also I've played sports all of my life so I have always stayed active and competitive! My husband and I own a local supplement and nutrition store, "Health Works Nutrition" and a supplement line

called "MACHINE SUPPLEMENTS". As a leader in the fitness industry we feel it's part of our job to stay healthy and in the best shape we possibly can!

We love your unique red swimsuit pictures on Instagram. Do people ever mention how you look like someone right out of the Baywatch franchise? I've been told I remind people of Pamela Anderson in that red one piece a few times, which I love! I have never been told that before and i don't think I look like her other than the blonde hair and big boobs LOL but I'll take the compliment! She was always one of the sexiest women on tv and a huge icon!

Speaking of Instagram, what are some of the worst and best pickup lines you've found lurking in your inbox? I get a lot of messages each day and most are from men, but I get messages from many women as well. I think that's the best compliment because women don't sugar coat anything. Women will only compliment other women when they really mean it and are truly inspired.I appreciate the messages from men too of course, as long as they're respectful. The worst is when men send inappropriate photos. Lol Why do men do this? It's truly pointless. Women want to hear sweet things like genuine compliments. Just be real and be honest, that will get you far with me.

The concept of a man has changed over the decades, would you say women are still attracted to the macho Alpha-type of a man ripped with muscles or is it more about emotions and intellect that makes a man attractive in 2021 or a combination of both? I am pretty old fashioned when it comes to men, and I've always been attracted to manly men who work hard and are athletic. I don't need huge muscles or perfect looks but that's a bonus!

If you don't mind us asking, do you have any preferences or types; that you look for in a potential partner? I don't understand today's generation of girls who like the mama's boys, or the skinny jeans wearing guys who play video games and don't know how to do anything. I want a man who's motivated and can do man things!

What would you say are your biggest turn-ons and turnoffs? My biggest turn on is confidence in and out of the bedroom! And someone who can make me laugh! I want to be made to feel sexy and beautiful all the time (what woman doesn't?). One thing about women that all men should learn is if you can make her feel like she's sexy all the time, she'll do a lot more for you, if you know what I mean! My biggest turn off is a man who doesn't know how to provide or do things on his own! My dad was super successful and knew how to do everything and I've noticed when a man can't do something on his own it definitely pushes me away. Women want men to take care of them even when we can take care of ourselves! It's sexy!

Beautiful women get compliments all the time, what would you say is the most common thing you get complimented on? The most common compliment I get in person is that I'm funny or have a good personality which is truly the very best compliment I could receive. On Instagram and other social media the most common compliment is that I'm sexy. Which took me years to accept. I was always very

modest until recent years, and now I'm finally completely comfortable with my sexuality!

What part of your body do you feel is the most sexiest, and why? The sexiest part of my body, I'd say, would be my eyes. That's something I've been complimented on my whole life and I feel you can tell a lot about a person by looking into their eyes.

When you're not working what are some of your absolute favorite things to do? My favorite thing in the world is music. I've played the piano and drums by ear since I was 5. Everyone who knows me knows music is very important to me. Also now that our kids are older and out of the house, my husband and I are taking advantage of this time to have some fun together! We love hosting pool parties and are adding more fun things to do at our home! We love to entertain!

Are you working on any exciting new projects for this year and could you tell us more about that? A few years ago I became intrigued with NPC Competitions. I wanted to be a part of that in any way possible, So I learned as much as I could, trained and entered the bikini division. After getting involved and learning the ins and outs of how

that worked I decided to become a sponsor and sell our MACHINE products at the events. It also inspired me to start an apparel company,so I could sell tshirts which became a big hit at the competitions and online as well.

If you could live anywhere in the world, where would it be and why? If I could live anywhere on earth it would be Australia! I am from Tennessee in the USA and it's beautiful but I've always wanted to live there. The way of life there for the citizens seems healthier and very educated. The Australian accent is 100% the sexiest thing on the planet lol and there are so many things about the Australian government that interest me. The fact that you can't just move there without bringing a worthy contribution tells me a lot, compared to the USA which is run much differently.

Do you have any last words of inspiration for our readers in these trying times and where can we follow your adventures on social media or online? My last words of advice are this: Free yourself from whatever is holding you back in life! Keep being sexy and explore your own desires and fantasies without inhibitions! Being sexy keeps us young! You have to stay strong and confident no matter your age! Work hard, be a good person and enjoy life to its fullest! The life you live is all up to you!

Playboy Interview

Kanye West

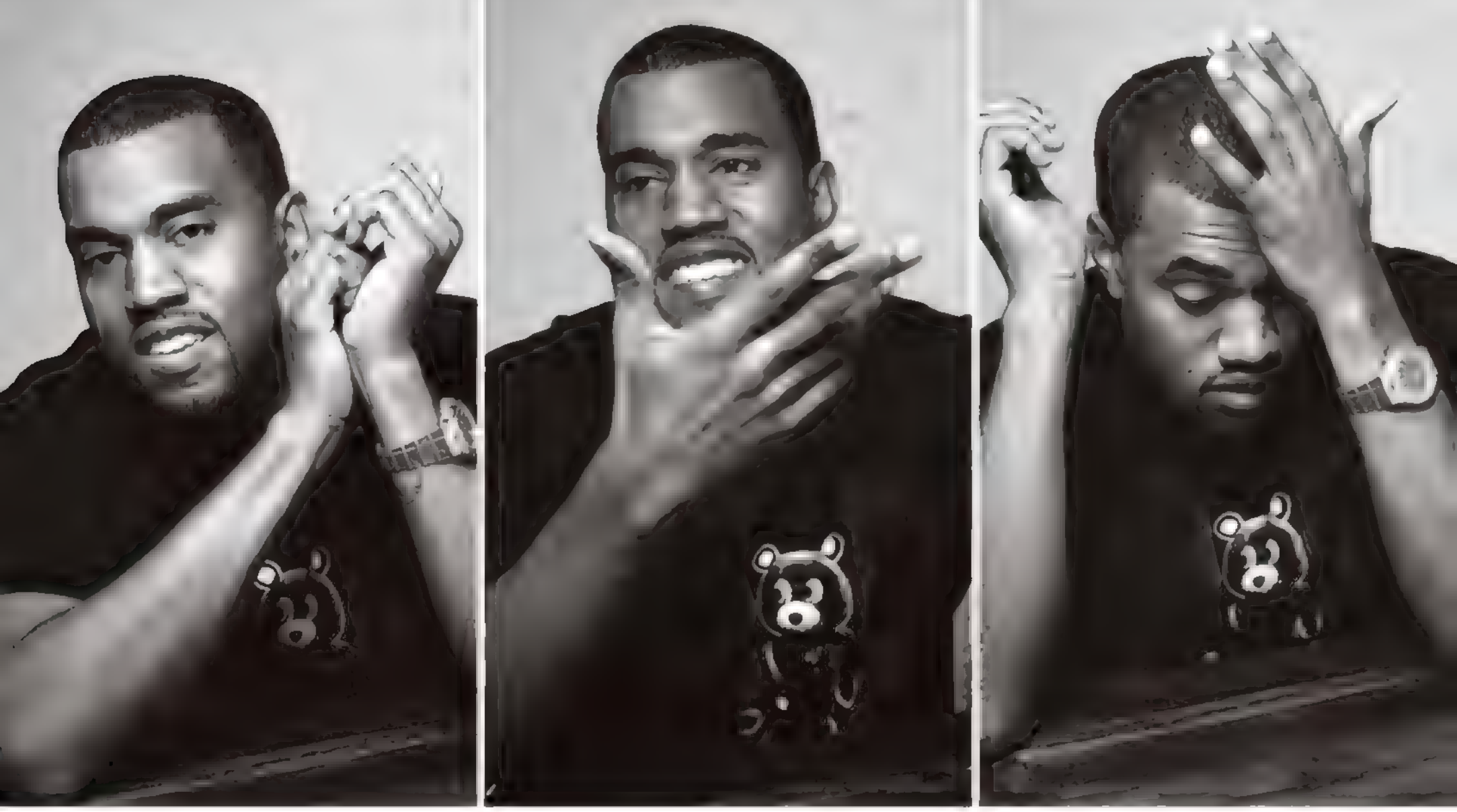
A candid conversation with the record of the year contender about his Katrina controversy, hip-hop homophobia and his addictions to porn and sex

INTERVIEW BY **ROB TANNENBAUM** PHOTOGRAPHY BY **DAVID ROSE**

"White people, this is your only chance to use the word p‘nigger,’" Kanye West shouts to the Theater at Madison Square Garden crowd roaring the words to p"Gold Digger," the biggest rap hit of the past year. "Take advantage of it."

That snapshot from West's recent tour sums up the wit and audacity of the 28-year-old rapper and producer. The chorus of the song p"I ain't saying she a gold digger/ But she ain't messing with no broke niggers"—is not only as catchy as bird flu, it's also a provocative comment about money, race and sex. A one-man smash factory who has produced songs for Alicia Keys, Mariah Carey, Janet Jackson, Ludacris, Talib Kweli, John Legend, Common, Cam'ron and Jay-Z, West doesn't back down from any topic—or from the spotlight.

Last September, during NBC's live broadcast of a benefit concert for Hurricane Katrina victims, West burst the apolitical cue-card solemnity, denouncing the media for referring to black New Orleanians as looters and alleging that the government had been slow to respond, because those in need were mostly black. His digression was full of pauses and incomplete sentences, and co-presenter Mike Myers stood by in silent panic. After Myers interjected a few



lines from the Teleprompter, West distilled his argument to its pith: p"George Bush doesn't care about black people." NBC instantly cut away and excised the dangerous moment from a rebroadcast later that night on the West Coast, but the clip was kept alive on the internet, where bloggers called West everything from a racist to a hero to a self-promoting profiteer.

His name, pronounced KAHN-yay, means p"the only one" in Swahili, and he's the lone child of Donda West, who recently retired as chair of the English department at Chicago State University, and Ray West, a photographer and former Black Panther who is now a Christian counselor. When Kanye was three, his parents split up. He was raised primarily by his doting mother, and his father has said, Kanye a"displayed his charisma even in day care."

He first wrote rhymes in third grade and four years later began to make beats, the produced tracks rappers rhyme over. He won an art scholarship but dropped out of college, lived at home and continued to struggle until 2001, the year of his personal tipping point: Jay-Z picked five West tracks for his CD The Blueprint, including m"Izzo (H.O.V.A.)," which used a Jackson 5 sample to (over)popularize the phrase "fo' shizzle my nizzle."

West's beats were vivid and brassy, and he helped even the dullest rappers get on the radio. But when he told Jay-Z and other decision makers at Roc-A-Fella Records that he wanted to rap, they snickered with reverse class snobbery. West came from a comfortable background and had no firsthand knowledge of drug dealing or weaponry; he was cute, wore pastel polo shirts with the collars turned up and couldn't have been more the opposite of 50 Cent, rap's biggest star of the past few years.

The record label finally relented, and West began to work with his customary industriousness. Driving from a studio one night in October 2002, he fell asleep and crashed his car, fracturing his jaw. With his mouth still wired shut, he recorded p"Through the Wire," one of four hit singles on his first CD, The College Dropout. They are songs of celebration and mourning, with comedy as the lone constant; in m"Slow Jamz" he talks about using old soul records to seduce women and drops a great joke at Michael Jackson's expense. But the album has as many wise cracks as wisecracks. In "Jesus Walks," West confesses both his sins and his devotion to Jesus, and "All Falls Down" traces young blacks' appetites for expensive sneakers and gold-heavy watches to insecurity: "We all self-conscious/I'm just the first to admit it." As it turned out, there was a big market for a rapper who'd never sold drugs. The best-reviewed album of 2004, The College Dropout sold 3 million copies and earned 10 Grammy nominations. The world suddenly gave West as much adulation as he said he deserved.

For Late Registration, released in August 2005, West added a co-producer, Jon Brion, a white Angeleno best known for working with Fiona Apple. No other rapper would have risked such an audacious move, and it paid off with even more raves. m"There's never been hip-hop so complex and subtle musically," wrote The Village Voice, while The New Yorker claimed the album m"encompasses decades of African American music." Late Registration broke West fully into the mainstream from the cover of Time magazine to a place among Barbara Walters's 10 Most Fascinating People of 2005.

While West was on tour, PLAYBOY sent writer Rob Tannenbaum to interview him; the two began their discussion backstage at a De Kalb, Illinois concert hall, then continued it later at a Manhattan studio. Tannenbaum reports, g"West's mind leaps around unpredictably, so in the course of our conversations he told me about the suede jacket he was wearing ('It's Yves Saint Laurent'), the music video he was editing with animator Bill Plympton and his 2,700-square-foot loft in SoHo, which has a 16-foot walk-in closet and a 12-foot bathroom sink.

"He says some pretty outrageous things, usually about how great he is, but it's a welcome antidote to the false modesty most stars put across. And it's clear he subscribes to the playful theory of Muhammad Ali: 'It's not bragging if you can back it up.'

"But it's also clear how seriously he takes his work. 'I really study rap,' he said, and he can keenly analyze changing trends in the arcane field of rhyming couplets. And he played at shatteringly high volume a new beat he'd written for Jay-Z, a simple, monstrous thing with a resounding cymbal. 'That beat is killing,' he said. 'Just think of that with Jay on it.' Along the way, he announced he had lured Jay-Z out of retirement. And no wonder: West really is that great. Just ask him."

PLAYBOY: Let's start with the seven words that made national headlines: g"George Bush doesn't care about black people." Had you planned on saying that, or was it an ad-lib?
WEST: I've never been asked this question before, but I totally didn't plan to say it. I planned the bullet points about the media portraying black people as looters and how it took the government so long to go down there to help. Bad news is great news, and I felt like CNN, NBC and all these stations were capitalizing on the tragedy.
PLAYBOY: Describe what led to your making that statement.
WEST: Tim McGraw did a song, and it was really emotional, showing all the imagery from New Orleans. When I went up to read the Teleprompter, I just thought what was on it wasn't heartfelt enough. They wanted me to read some random point about the levees. Mike Myers and I talked about how we had a problem with that word. He said, g"I just don't want to mispronounce levees." That was his main goal when we went up there. He was already nervous, and I told him, "Yo, I might stray off the Teleprompter a little bit." I told him I was going to ad-lib. I was talking to him backstage, and I saw Chris Tucker. I remember telling Chris, "Get ready for live TV."
PLAYBOY: Did Myers say anything when you got off camera?
WEST: He shook my hand and said, g"It is what it is."
PLAYBOY: What kind of greeting did you get backstage?
WEST: The Red Cross and the NBC execs didn't say anything to me. They acted like I wasn't even in the building. Before that, it was all VIP.
PLAYBOY: How did the day end?
WEST: At the bar, taking shots of Patrón. [laughs] You know, if you go up and hit the class bully in his face, you're like, m"What am I going to do tomorrow?" I still live in a country that George Bush controls.
PLAYBOY: When NBC broadcast the telethon on the West Coast, it cut your comment about the president.
WEST: I thought that was great because it proved my point about the media. It let America know that the media still censors us and monitors us and brainwashes us. For them to chop it, everybody in America was like, g"Oh shit, they still do that? I thought this was America." Yeah, this is America. This is America.
PLAYBOY: Did the reaction surprise you?
WEST: A lot of people feel that Bush doesn't care about poor people. It's a common opinion.
PLAYBOY: But you didn't say he doesn't care about poor people; you said he doesn't care about black people. There's a difference.
WEST: There just happen to be way more poor black people. If you pick at the statement, I'm sure you could find something wrong, but that was the overall feeling of America at the time.
PLAYBOY: Entertainers don't often really speak their mind, especially not on live TV.
WEST: And entertainers who would say what they're thinking wouldn't be given that opportunity on live TV. Networks are more

apt to put a five-second delay on me now. They didn't really listen to g"All Falls Down" and "Jesus Walks" and "Crack Music." They just heard the hooks. They didn't hear what I was saying about social issues. With my polo collars popped, they never saw me coming

PLAYBOY: There's an element of social awareness to your music but also a party element. They probably thought they were going to get the second guy.

WEST: I bet they wouldn't have put Dave Chappelle up there. But that's who I am: I'm like the rap version of Chappelle.

PLAYBOY: What's the similarity?

WEST: He talks about serious things, but he makes you laugh to keep from crying. The humor is the honey in the medicine.

PLAYBOY: Actually Chappelle's been doing a joke about you: g"I gotta give props to my man Kanye West because he said some real shit. That took a lot of bravery and a lot of strength. I'm proud of Kanye. And I'm gonna miss him so much."

WEST: [*Laughs*] Oh shit. That's why we were popping Patrón that night.

PLAYBOY: Laura Bush denounced your comment as disgusting, and Bill O'Reilly said it was g"simply nutty" and called you a "dopey little rapper." Did any of the criticism bother you?

WEST: I didn't even know that until now. I care as much about Bill O'Reilly as I care about somebody at my show who goes to the bathroom during g"Jesus Walks." I'm not going to stop the song; I'm not going to stop my show. Matter of fact, I need to never say his name again, because I'm making him too hot right now.

PLAYBOY: He does love to pick on rappers

WEST: He can't pick on us. He picks at us. We're like statues. He picks at pop-culture icons, which is what we rappers are right now, like modern-day royalty.

PLAYBOY: Did anything about the coverage of your comments bother you?

WEST: People kept misquoting me and using incorrect English: [in an exaggerated dialect] m"George Bush don't be carin' 'bout no black people." And I'm like, "I didn't say that."

PLAYBOY: Has the comment hurt you in any way? It seems you got a lot of publicity from it.

WEST: I wouldn't say it was the smartest business move. At this point I'm not going to say any more things that could be harmful to me. PLAYBOY: So we shouldn't ask for your position on the war in Iraq or Supreme Court nominees?

WEST: I'm not into politics at all. I can't even name the people in politics. That's not what I do. I've learned from this how powerful my voice is. It's like going to your bank to take out $20 and seeing $1 million in your account. You're like, g"Oh shit, what am I gonna do with this?" Now I know my voice is powerful, and I just try to use it wisely.

PLAYBOY: During the telethon, you announced you were going to donate g"the biggest amount I can give." So how much did you donate?

WEST: I would never tell you that. I called my business manager, and I was like, g"Yo, what's the most I can give?" And that's what we gave.

PLAYBOY: You won't name an amount?

WEST: I'll just say it's way more than I would have made in a year if I'd gone to college and gotten my doctorate.

PLAYBOY: Before your career as a rapper, you were one of the biggest producers in hip-hop. How good a rapper are you? The New Yorker described you as m"merely average," and Entertainment Weekly said you have a m"clunky flow."

WEST: I'm nowhere near as good as Jay-Z, Eminem or Nas. So I compensate.

PLAYBOY: How do you compensate?

WEST: With star power, sheer energy, entertainment, videos, really good outfits and overwhelmingly, ridiculously dope tracks. Justin Timberlake isn't the best singer, but he's a true star, the entire package. The main thing I use to make up for my lack of rapping skills is my content, my subject matter

PLAYBOY: What's an example?

WEST: I'll use words or rhymes no other rapper has used. [raps] m"Take your diamonds and throw m'em up like you're bulimic/ Yeah, the beat cold, but the flow is anemic." Damn, nobody would ever rhyme those two words together. When they come up with a hip-hop curriculum, I want my raps to be in the textbooks.

PLAYBOY: Some people say you just rap about clothes and brand names.

WEST: How could someone possibly say all I do is rap about brands, when my biggest songs don't even really mention them? If someone says that, it's blatantly stupid, and I refuse to argue with a stupid person because from a distance you can't tell who's who.

PLAYBOY: If you're trying to raise people up with your music, why use so many brand names?

WEST: I really do care about the music itself, but I also care about superficial consumer shit. I really like Atlanta strippers, like, a lot. I really like Louis Vuitton. I have multicolor trunks stacked up in my loft in New York.

PLAYBOY: Fine, you have Louis Vuitton in your apartment. But why put it in your songs?

WEST: What is it they say? g"Great art is met with mediocre initial response." It's the same. If I throw some Gucci and Louis on top of a song that means something, I get your attention. And it comes from the heart. It hurt to be at the Gucci store with a girlfriend, acting like I was going to try on something, and she was busting me because I didn't have enough money for it. [raps] m"Back when Gucci was the shit to rock/Back when Slick Rick got the shit to pop/I'd do anything to say I got it/Damn, them new loafers hurt my pocket." Any person who loves clothes is going to hear that and be like, "Yo, I feel him." Like when I say, "We're all self-conscious/I'm just the first to admit it," many people relate to it.

PLAYBOY: 50 Cent says you owe your success to him because people wanted a rapper who didn't wear a bulletproof jacket and have bullet scars.

WEST: There was no successful black artist who was like a regular person and also liked cars and clothes. That was my niche. On The College Dropout, the songs offer melody and message. That's the main goal. I saw it as a simple math project: If I can rap 70 to 80 percent as good as the beats are, I'll be successful.

PLAYBOY: Why are your songs so much more successful than other rap songs?

"I'm not into politics at all. I can't even name the people in politics."

WEST: Choruses and hooks. That's why the Black Eyed Peas' g"My Humps" is a killer. That song is just constant hooks all the way. See, people think a chorus is the only hook, but "Gold Digger" has so many hooks in it. Jamie's intro, that's a hook. The drum intro, that's a hook. "I ain't sayin' she a gold digger"; that's a hook. The entire second verse is a hook: "18 years, 18 years." That could be a chorus! "We want prenup"; that's a hook. And the white-girl line? That's why I get the big bucks. That's bottom of the ninth, bases loaded, World Series. That's gold.

PLAYBOY: At the end of g"Gold Digger," you say, "When you get on, he'll leave your ass for a white girl."

WEST: It uses profanity, and it's shocking and controversial and fucked-up and funny. It's so perfect and out of the park. It touches on social anxieties and over-compensation and racial tension. Black people say, g"Yeah, that does happen." At one of my concerts I saw white girls with T-shirts that read he'll leave your ass for a white girl. Like, "Yay!" They're very happy about that line

PLAYBOY: So the combination of hooks and provocation made g"Gold Digger" one of the biggest songs of 2005?

WEST: God wanted me to have g"Gold Digger." You know, I made that song for someone else; I wrote it for Shawnna from Disturbing tha Peace, but she had problems clearing the sample and had to turn her album in. At the end of the day—all bullshit aside, all the shit I talk aside—God hands me these records. And Jon Brion, he was a dope-ass producer, a guy who could just sit there and check my lyrics.

PLAYBOY: Wait. You took advice about rapping from a white piano player? Most rappers would have thrown him out of the studio.

WEST: Right. And that's why so many people make inadequate music. I beg for criticism. I'll get 30 opinions on what's wrong with a song and fix all of those things. So when it comes out, you can't tell me shit. You can't learn anything from a compliment. I also had a poetry instructor. She was on Def Poetry Jam with me, and I was like, Yo, she is so much better than me at this. If I could apply this, I could be like a Bob Dylan, a Bob Marley, a Stevie Wonder, a Prince, a John Lennon m"Gold Digger" is straight poetry. I'd like to state this, and fuck whoever tells me I can't word it out loud: "Gold Digger" is one of the biggest songs of our lifetime. It'll be there with "In da Club" and "When Doves Cry."

PLAYBOY: Do you expect to win the Grammy for record of the year on February 8?

WEST: For all I know, I'm not going to win one Grammy this year. You know, I talked a lot of shit last year. When I got the 10 nominations for the 2005 awards, I said, g"I'm the face of the Grammys." I thought that was really funny. But it was true at the end of the day. The older voters might have been like—What's my boy's name from the L.A. Times? Bill? Bob?

PLAYBOY: Robert Hilburn. He was the Los Angeles Times music critic for 35 years.

WEST: Yeah. He wrote this dope article, saying, g"Grammy credibility, for the second year in a row, revolves around a single artist: Kanye West." For the 2006 awards the only people I would accept defeating me for album of the year would be System of a Down, and they didn't get nominated. I made a really good album, but how do I word this? I'm not trying to dis people, but there weren't that many really, really good albums. You know, if you're a championship team, it feels better if the series goes seven games, but this year it's a straight four-game blowout. What albums would be up against me?

PLAYBOY: If you had Grammy voters right here, what would you say to them about why you deserve album of the year?

WEST: First thing I'd say is g"Don't worry about all the things I say in the media. They're just true." [laughs]

PLAYBOY: Having gone to a few of your concerts, we've noticed you have more white fans than most rappers.

WEST: I always wanted to make raps that could be respected in the barbershop but that an old white lady could also understand. So I'm Jadakiss meets Will Smith.

PLAYBOY: Does your having pop hits make it harder for some people to take your music seriously?

WEST: You know, I'm still thinking about the whole Grammy thing. Like, my mother told me I should stop talking, but I wasn't going to stop saying I should win album of the year just so I could win album of the year. I even make it harder for myself by talking so much shit. There was a TV poll asking, g"Do you think West's comment on NBC will hurt his chances at the Grammys?" And people said, "No, but the way he acted at the awards show last year will hurt his chances." [laughs]

PLAYBOY: What did your mom say to you?

WEST: She told me to shut the fuck up—in like a nice English-professor way.

PLAYBOY: When your mom tells you to shut the fuck up, maybe it's time to shut the fuck up.

WEST: Put it like this: The Grammy award is great. Everybody celebrates you, you get endorsements and everybody looks at you like, yo, this is a really quality artist. But I celebrate awards every day by talking shit, by saying I'm going to win. Think about that. I didn't win the most Grammys last year, so I would have done myself a disservice not to talk shit when I had the most nominations. That'd be like getting a fucking star in Super Mario Bros. and just walking at a regular pace instead of running around. When you get that star, go and kill as many mushrooms as possible.

PLAYBOY: Still, having pop hits must have drawbacks.

WEST: I want my music to be as real as possible. With the Black Eyed Peas, I feel their music is pure and honest, but I don't think it's perceived as that.

PLAYBOY: That's the second time you've said something good about the Black Eyed Peas.

WEST: I love the Black Eyed Peas!

PLAYBOY: We've always wondered what rapper would risk his reputation to defend them.

WEST: You know, I speak up about whatever I'm feeling, whether it's a common opinion or not. I think they're talented, and I argue with people about them all the time. Well, see, I didn't need to say I have to argue with people, because now they'll read this and feel a little bad about it. It's like when people come up to me in an airport and say, g"Yo, man, I argue with people all the time. I try to tell

"I think I might have a problem, a sexual addiction. I have porn on me at all times."

them you not no bitch-ass nigga."
PLAYBOY: How do you reply to that?
WEST: I say, g"Thank you, I appreciate that. Thank you for telling me you have to argue with people all the time." [laughs] You don't want to hear that at eight o'clock in the morning. It implies that everybody's saying bad stuff about me. They'll say, m"Well, I thought you were arrogant because I read some article about you."
PLAYBOY: Why would people think you are arrogant?
WEST: Because of how the media portrays me.
PLAYBOY: Come on, Kanye. If people think you're arrogant, it's not only because of how the media portrays you. You've got some arrogance in you.
WEST: Nah, I might have some cockiness. It's always a conflict: Maybe I'm more self-conscious than I am self-confident, and self-consciousness is what makes me ask 30 different people for their opinions. I overcompensate for my anxieties.
PLAYBOY: But you even refer to yourself as g"the international asshole" in one song
WEST: That's just playing into what people believe. Like, okay, people have this perception; let's fuck with it a little bit. Here is a statement that will come off as arrogant: I almost wish I could not be me for a day, just so I could be entertained by the shit I say. [laughs] You know, that's a good beginning for a rap. It even rhymes. I need to put that in a rap.
PLAYBOY: Let's talk about your background. Describe the street you grew up on.
WEST: All over the world, actually. I stayed in China an entire year when I was in fifth grade. I stayed in different places growing up in Chicago, all the way from the inner-city South Side, which was gang-populated, to the suburbs, which were gang-populated, to even further suburbs, also gang-populated. In Chicago you're not getting away from the gangs.
PLAYBOY: Were you in gangs?
WEST: No. I was always focused on something creative. It would seem like I was in my own world. I'm sure you'd say I was special.
PLAYBOY: In what way were you special?
WEST: Well, I grew up to become me.
PLAYBOY: Okay, but what was special about you at the age of 10?
WEST: I was a performer and a ham and just wanted to entertain. I would always ask questions; I was never good with g"Because I told you so." And I hate when parents try to stop their kids from asking questions. Kids should ask as many questions as possible. Whenever I'm around somebody I admire, I question them to death.
PLAYBOY: Were you funny-looking? Didn't you have braces?
WEST: Not until high school. People in my family would act like my teeth were okay, but whenever we were talking about each other, that would be the main joke. I went to a girlfriend's house, and her neighbor's sister said, g"Your teeth are big and white just like horse teeth." I said, "Fuck this." When I got braces, the orthodontist had to remove eight teeth. And I've got a big mouth! So imagine how big my teeth were
PLAYBOY: You're very close to your mother. Would it be fair to say you were a mama's boy?
WEST: Yeah, I'd say so. My dad had a lot of influence too.
PLAYBOY: He was a Black Panther, and to a lot of people that means a militant, Afrocentric separatist.
WEST: He wasn't a separatist. We lived in an all-white neighborhood. It's funny. He was like, g"I don't want anybody to know I'm a Black Panther." He was a military brat, so he was raised around white people, but they didn't like him because he was black. Then he'd go around black people, and they didn't like him because he talked white. It was hard for him, and he was always looking for a home or a movement, something to be part of.
PLAYBOY: It sounds as if you had a happy childhood even though your parents divorced.
WEST: Yeah, I used that to my advantage. I'd ask Mom for something, then ask Dad for something.
PLAYBOY: Were you a spoiled only child?
WEST: I was taught a lot about morals and values. My father or stepfather would have me cutting the grass while everybody else was playing basketball. Or my mother would buy me only two pairs of shoes a year when she could afford to buy a pair of shoes every month. That made me appreciate stuff. And it made me feel a want or a need for stuff. So now when I buy clothes, I really do feel fulfilled. Like a little kid who always wanted to go to Disney World: You go to Disney World, and it's great. So Gucci is like Disney World for me.
PLAYBOY: But there must have been something bothering you as a kid, because you were a bed wetter.
WEST: Yeah, I don't want to talk about that.
PLAYBOY: Why not? You even mention it in a song.
WEST: [Silence, shakes head]
PLAYBOY: Okay, so tell us about your grandfather Portwood Williams. He was involved in the civil-rights movement in Oklahoma in 1958, which you refer to in g"Never Let Me Down."
WEST: He's just a great figure in Oklahoma City. He's got monuments and stuff. Yeah, he's the number-one stunner. He'll start off a sentence by saying, g"I am the master," the same way other people would say "Hello" or "How are you?" He loves having me as a grandson. He'll be like, "Yo, my grandson is Kanye."
PLAYBOY: It's easy to see where you got your confidence.
WEST: But he's way more eloquent. People say I'm a good speaker for a rapper, but I fall short. I can't talk after Barack Obama or Oprah Winfrey. Ninety percent of the time I fall short of my goal. I want my concert to be as stunning as U2's or Michael Jackson's. People say my show is great, but I know it's not as good as that Talking Heads DVD I just saw, Stop Making Sense. See, I threw out that Talking Heads reference to sound like I know a lot about music.
PLAYBOY: You keep revising many of your songs until the last possible second. Isn't that a difficult way to work?
WEST: I envy people who settle for mediocrity. Right when Late Registration was about to come out, I was driving myself crazy. The years I'm losing off my life stressing out about a drum sound are the reason people can go to the store and purchase albums of the caliber of Late Registration. My pain is everyone else's pleasure. Everything I worry about is a gift I give to the world. I can't say I perfected my album, but any song that's perfect would be bad because imperfection is a quality people relate to.
PLAYBOY: Is that why you sing on your records?
WEST: Are you asking me if I sing to make my records worse? [laughs] Yeah. I was singing on the original version of m"Heard m'Em Say," and I felt like it was making it too "worse." I used incorrect English on purpose—just put worse in quotation marks.
PLAYBOY: In g"Drive Slow" you talk about being a teenage virgin. How old were you when you lost your virginity?
WEST: [To girlfriend] Can you please leave the room? [she leaves] I was 17, which is remarkably late by our standards. I think my game was wack.
PLAYBOY: So who took your virginity?
WEST: She was my girlfriend, and she had great titties, even by my standards today. She had a bit of a gut, though. I wouldn't fuck with that now. She was short, like five-foot-four, with 36Ds. And the nipples were almost the same color as the skin. I used to love those fucking titties. I'd stare at them.
PLAYBOY: Your game has gotten a lot better in the past few years. Are you taking advantage of your fame?
WEST: In between having a girlfriend, sure, but I don't really wild

out. I'll show you some of my girlfriends' pictures on a website as long as you don't print the name of it. If I were to tell you, g"Yo, I did this and this," it might be a little bit tasteless coming from me.
PLAYBOY: You graduated from high school in 1995, and your breakthrough was Jay-Z's The Blueprint, which came out in 2001. What were you doing in between those years?
WEST: I went to college for a year and a half. I worked a telemarketing job, selling insurance to people who bought stuff with a Montgomery Ward credit card. I was way better than most of the people there. I could sit around and draw pictures, basically do other shit while I was reading the Teleprompter. [laughs] Even back then I would stray from the Teleprompter.
PLAYBOY: You've also been producing since you were in seventh grade. Were you able to sell the tracks you made?
WEST: I was hustling beats, selling them to local drug dealers for $200 or $250. I had a platinum plaque when I was 19 for working on Jermaine Dupri's first album. I was making $60,000 or $70,000 a year by the age of 20 or 21.
PLAYBOY: But you had a lot of frustration too. Your career stalled.
WEST: I couldn't make ends meet. You're chasing dreams, you want something so bad, you're so close to it. I remember me and Just Blaze would have beats on the same album, and six months later he'd have 20 more beats sold and I'd have one beat sold. And it hurt. Like, damn, I thought we were the same caliber. But he could buy whatever he wanted, and I wasn't sure I could pay the rent.
PLAYBOY: Even though you couldn't pay the rent, you were telling people you'd be bigger than Michael Jackson.
WEST: I didn't say that all the time, but I remember telling executives at Sony that.
PLAYBOY: That's awfully cocky for a guy who had nothing.
WEST: Hey, you gotta dream big What's the point in saying, g"I'm gonna be bigger than Tito Jackson"?
PLAYBOY: For a guy with that much confidence, it must have been a shock to struggle at selling your music
WEST: I had one nervous breakdown I talk about on g"Touch the Sky," when I busted out crying. My girlfriend and I were in a room together, listening to the first Lil' Kim CD, Hard Core. I would listen to Lil' Kim, then listen to my beat, another Lil' Kim song, then my beat. It sounded like the same caliber to me, but I couldn't sell a fucking beat. And I just stood next to that stereo and busted out crying and shaking. I didn't have control of my body, didn't have control of my emotions. It didn't make any sense. If I could have sold even one beat, that $7,500 would have meant so much to me. I was living in New York, 600 miles from home, and had $300 in my bank account. You should never have less in your account than how far you are from your crib.
PLAYBOY: Once you were established as a producer, what kind of response did you get when you told people you wanted to rap too?
WEST: So many people thought I was wack.
PLAYBOY: Well, rappers are supposed to be from the hood. You grew up middle-class in the suburbs. Jay-Z says he didn't believe in you because you weren't ghetto.
WEST: Yeah, but also my raps were trying to be ghetto. They didn't believe that, coming from me. I had to figure out my niche.
PLAYBOY: Can we hear one of your ghetto rhymes?
WEST: It was something like, g"I got the platinum chain to show you what my stacks is about/And a platinum gat to back up what I'm rapping about." It was good wordplay. Some people believed in me. They thought the shit was pretty hot. People always talk about how bad my raps were, but if you go back and listen to them, they're better than a lot of shit that's out today.
PLAYBOY: So when did people start to believe in you?
WEST: With g"Slow Jamz," when you heard the line "She got a light-skinned friend look like Michael Jackson/Got a dark-skinned friend look like Michael Jackson," you all knew you were dealing with a star. That is one of the greatest punch lines in rap history.
PLAYBOY: Let's talk about your car accident. You fell asleep at the wheel when you were making The College Dropout.
WEST: Okay Damn, there is a lot of interesting stuff that happened to me.
PLAYBOY: When you came to, what did you see in the mirror?
WEST: I saw my mouth getting bigger and bigger, like in a horror movie. My jaw was separated, and inside it was broken open. I was in the car for like 10 minutes before anybody got there, and I called my girlfriend and my mother to apologize for hurting myself. I didn't know if I was going to be able to rap again. I'd been working so hard to do this album I already had g"All Falls Down" and "Jesus Walks."
PLAYBOY: What happened when you got to the emergency room?
WEST: Man, that was a bad experience. The things they had to do to support my jaw were just hurting it worse. This one lady kept on talking to me. I said, g"Why are you talking to me? Can't you see my mouth is fucked up?" But she kept on having me talk. You know how they keep you talking so you don't die or something? But it was like they were about to make me die—talk me to death, literally.
PLAYBOY: And you say the accident was good for your career. How?
WEST: That's one of the best things that can happen to a rapper, to almost die. Tupac, 50 Cent and now me. People connected with that.
PLAYBOY: It made you seem a little tougher. People don't usually think of you as tough.
WEST: I'm not a tough guy, but I'm a strong person. Rap music innately has to be hard. But we've changed what it means to be hard because life itself is hard. I've started presenting the hardship of regular people's lives. Hard isn't always g"I went to jail" or "I have to shoot somebody. I'm gonna kill somebody today." Hard is anything: "I have a test to take." All I did was see the open lane.
PLAYBOY: The reaction to The College Dropout wasn't quite instant acclaim
WEST: When it first came out, I was frustrated that people didn't believe in me. That's when you would read quotes that came off as more arrogant or defensive than funny. Now I don't have to be defensive at all. When people try to attack me, it's like, Come on, fam. What else do you need me to do?

"I try to walk and be more Christlike. I'm a man, and I have shortcomings. But I think if there were a bible written today in the new millennium, I'd be one of the characters in it."

GS-1930

PLAYBOY: Late Registration has some conspiracy-theory lyrics. Do you believe the government is spreading AIDS, as you suggest in m"Heard m'Em Say"?

WEST: Right now? No. But I do believe the theory that AIDS was being placed in Africa. I do believe the FBI placed crack in the black community. I believe the U.S. government gave smallpox to the Indians. I believe financial institutions are capitalizing on the African AIDS epidemic.

PLAYBOY: Not all of those theories are equally credible. What's your source for the government starting AIDS in Africa?

WEST: You know what? I don't have the answer to that. Life isn't a big test in which I have to know the answer right now. People always want me to say things in black-and-white. g"What's your answer to this?" So many people hang on every word I say. I feel like I'm in Forrest Gump, the scene when he's running and everybody's coming up alongside him, asking, m"What do you think about this?" He steps in shit and says, "Shit happens," and then there are bumper stickers. That's my life right now.

PLAYBOY: What would we find if we drug-tested you?

WEST: Does alcohol show up? You'd find some Hennessy, some Belvedere and that's it. The only drug I've done is weed. I used to smoke weed like every day. I hated it, though. It gave me a headache. But I'm really intrigued by the 1980s white yuppie cocaine culture. That was an inspiration for Late Registration: white modern buildings, leather jackets, Lamborghinis, model bitches, all that. I wanted to make the album darker and sexier than the first one. I don't do any other form of drug. My only drug is porn.

PLAYBOY: What's your taste in porn?

WEST: Elegant Angel is pretty good, and the Brazilian joints are crazy.

PLAYBOY: Are you unapologetic about porn? Do you play it in front of your girlfriend?

WEST: Yeah, I'll just keep it on. That's one of the old pimp moves: If the girl comes over, have porn playing. If she's like, g"Ugh," hurry up and turn it off. "Man, I don't know who left that on!" And if she says, "Hmm, what's this?" then keep it playing, keep it playing, [laughs]

PLAYBOY: Not everyone admits to liking porn.

WEST: We all like porn; I'm just the first to admit it. I could show you examples of some things I like.

PLAYBOY: Let's look at the bookmarks on your laptop: g"Ass man's paradise," "Mexican lust."

WEST: I have normal conversations all the time while I'm looking at these sites. If this were a phone interview, I'd probably be looking at porn. It's an addiction. Whenever we go to the porn store, we call it the crack house. And I stash my porn just like someone would stash weed, in a baggie. Here, these are some really good ones.

PLAYBOY: Let's see what you've got in the bag. Ghetto Booty. Housewives Gone Black, Part 3. She's Got Ass, Part 9. My Daughter Is Fucking Blackzilla. All That Ass Brazil 30. Black and Wild, Volume 18.

WEST: This girl's incredible. See that? PLAYBOY

would never have that. I don't think PLAYBOY has enough ass. But the best girl you had in the past three years has to be Rita G., the Spanish girl. She's got an ass even white people like. PLAYBOY: One of your biggest songs is g"Jesus Walks." Is Jesus happy with you?

WEST: God is. I personally believe Jesus died for our sins, because that's the way I was raised. Same reason I like fat asses: That's how I was raised. If I had been raised in an all-white community, maybe I'd like skinny asses. I try to walk and be more Christlike. I'm a man, and I have shortcomings. But I think if there were a bible written today in the new millennium, I'd be one of the characters in it.

PLAYBOY: What role would you play in this bible?

WEST: I'd be a griot. I bring up historical subjects in a way that makes kids want to learn about them. I'm an inspirational speaker. I changed the sound of music more than one time: I did it with The Blueprint, did it again with The College Dropout For all these reasons, I'd be a part of the bible. I'm definitely in the history books already. m"Jesus Walks" that song will never go away.

PLAYBOY: Is the devil trying to get you too?

WEST: Always. Let's take it back to Atlanta, back to the strippers. You know, when Marvin Gaye made g"Sexual Healing," it was a fun song, but he really did have a problem with sex. And I think I might have a problem, a sexual addiction. I have porn on me at all times.

PLAYBOY: Haven't you mostly been in relationships for the past few years?

WEST: Lust is part of the reason I've been out of relationships too. I just want to do it all the time. All the time. Like four times a night. And then in the morning.

PLAYBOY: Are you bothered by your addictions?

WEST: In g"Touch the Sky," I say, "I'm trying to right my wrongs/But it's funny them same wrongs help me write this song." Those addictions and afflictions are what make me a great artist. If I were perfect, if I didn't have any conflicts, what would I have to say? My biggest problem is lust, looking at girls with big booties.

PLAYBOY: You're one of the few rappers who have spoken out against homophobia. How did that go over?

WEST: I got more backlash for that than I did for my George Bush comment. I said it's wrong to discriminate against gays, to call them fags and to gay bash. And people were like, g"We don't agree with you. We feel like it's okay to do that." What I said about Bush was just popular opinion, but homophobia is so taboo to talk about. If you bring it up, people say you must be gay, and then they hate you also In the black community, not just in rap, it's a thing people stay away from. They mention gays only in a negative way, even if they have a gay cousin or they know the choir director. And I had to learn from experience. I felt like it was okay to say "fag."

PLAYBOY: In the past you used the word fag in your songs.

WEST: Yeah, I'm sure I did. Even to this day I'm dealing with my personal homophobia. I'm not gay, and I don't feel comfortable in a gay bar. I wouldn't be at a gay parade.

PLAYBOY: It's possible to be opposed to gay bashing but still feel some homophobia.

WEST: Yeah, like I think it's wrong to lust, but I still end up at the strip club.

PLAYBOY: What hip-hop trend would you like to see die?

WEST: Hip-hop trends die on their own. That's like going to a senior citizens' home and asking, g"Who do you want to die?" Yo, they're all going to die pretty soon! That's what hip-hop is about. At the point when my albums become classic, they transcend hip-hop. Because hip-hop is about being fresh.

PLAYBOY: You said earlier that you were making $70,000 a year when you were 21. How much have you made in the past year?

WEST: Millions. With a real long s at the end. Yeah, millionsssssss

PLAYBOY: Here's one number we heard. A movie studio paid $700,000 for the use of g"Jesus Walks" in Jarhead.

WEST: Let me check with my lawyer. So add that up, that's one thing, and I have multiple movie offers and multiple shows. But I need to figure out a way to make more.

PLAYBOY: You're not making enough money?

WEST: No, I'm not. Not to do all the things I want to do creatively. Now that I can get pretty much anything I want for myself, I want to show people art. I want people to know about the architecture in Prague. I'd like to purchase a castle in Europe and renovate it. I want to design buildings. I want to produce movies and have complete ownership so I don't have to run ideas by people. I'm meeting with the biggest movie director in the game. I don't want to say his name.

PLAYBOY: Well, the biggest director in Hollywood is Steven Spielberg. Is that who you're meeting with?

WEST: Okay, yeah. And I'm writing a TV show with Rick Rubin and Larry Charles, who wrote Seinfeld with Larry David. So it's like the real shit. I've been talking to Ben Stiller about some things. This year I met with the Steves: Stevie Wonder, Steve Jobs and Steven Spielberg. I'm going to the Kanye Wests of their genres.

PLAYBOY: What about music?

WEST: What about it? Asking me g"What about music?" is like coming to Spielberg and asking him "What about movies?" This is what I do and what I will continue to do at the highest caliber possible.

PLAYBOY: Are you producing anyone?

WEST: I'm producing Jay-Z's new album. I'm doing the whole thing.

PLAYBOY: Wait a minute. When we interviewed Jay-Z in PLAYBOY three years ago, he told us he was retiring. And we made him a bet: If he comes out of retirement, he owes us $1,000.

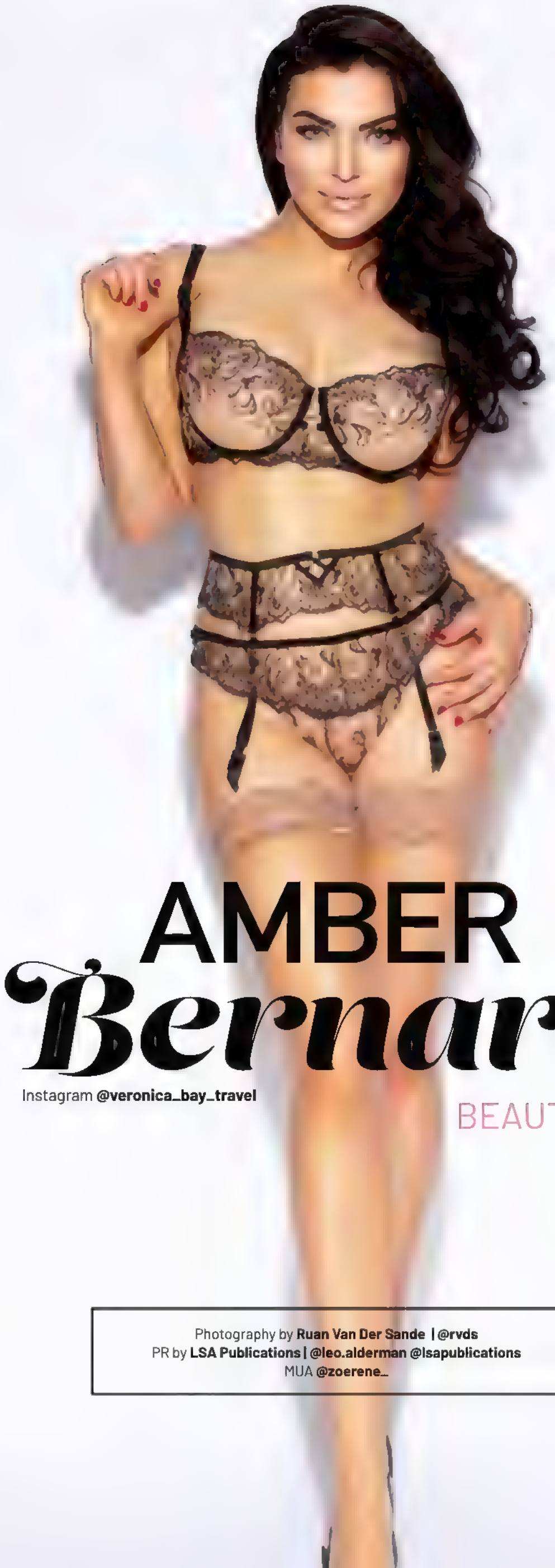
WEST: Well, he's about to pay.

PLAYBOY: Rap careers come and go in a pretty short time. As you said, trends die out; even the hot producers burn out quickly. How long are you going to stick around?

WEST: As long as I want to. I've had beats that were impactful on the culture for the past six years, and I'm not stopping anytime soon. I see things I still want to do that no one has done before. I could be the Steve Jobs of hip-hop. I'm making a beat a day, and they're coming out pretty good.

PLAYBOY: Yeah, but in g"Spaceship" you say you used to make five beats a day. You're slowing down.

WEST: Yeah, you can put that in the story. Kanye's falling off. [laughs] He's making only one beat a day.



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BEAUTY AND BRAINS

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JOURNEY
Coming from a business administration background and always being a large scale thinker I had never taken modelling seriously. I had been randomly cast during a high street window shopping by a scout from a local modelling agency. They were looking for my type of a girl and soon I had found myself at billboards all over Swizerland, where the brand I modelled for was from.

Later I had modelled for a number of clothing and lifestyle brands but I always focused on my career as an entrepreneur. Now I am a proud owner a luxury concierge company that is a boutique provider of leisure and parties for HNWI, corporate and private.

Being currently single I still see lingerie modelling as fun and truly enjoy it.

WHERE I AM FROM
Grown up in Egypt I'm a child of a northern European and a British expats parents. I could not wish for a safer and more amazing childhood: endless beaches, gorgeous Red Sea and friendly locals.

WHAT SURPRISES ME
I would rather say what impresses me: sharp mind, genuine effort and loving care. I am profoundly touched when a person thinks ahead of what can make me happy and does it without asking me. I trust actions and not words.

2020 was an amazingly productive year for me. While some were complaining and staying bored at home, I had made use of quarantine time and was non-stop busy with my business projects and barely had time to socialise. Then I travelled to Dubai where weather and social life are much more favourable. Everyone is a creator of his own reality.

THINGS I LIKE TO DO
Being a girly girl I love designer shopping and fine dining. Though my latest passion is property investment (in case if you wonder what to get me for my upcoming birthday;), in a day to day life I enjoy hiking, exploring other cultures and yoga.

FEATURES OF AN IDEAL PARTNER
Courage, kindness and generosity.
I would not invest (my time and energy) in a man who does not invest in me.

THINGS MAKES ME RUN THE OTHER WAY
Poor manners, bad breath and lack of effort from a man.

HIDDEN TALENTS
I had been told that I'm a very inspirational and emotionally giving person. I have also professionally studied and love giving Swedish massage;)

MAKES ME FEEL SEXY
My man's attention makes me feel sexy. When it comes to clothes I feel most sexy in a set of elegant lingerie, stockings and high heels.

A SUPERPOWER
I would wish for, would be an ability to encourage people to be the best version of themselves. I often see talented people who are scared to leave their comfort zone . Wish I could convince them to develop their talent and grow.

PLANS THIS YEAR
I continue developing my concierge brand, take part in fashion and lifestyle photography projects as a model, travel, and most importantly enjoy life. Hope this year I will meet a man of my dreams.

FINAL WORDS FOR READERS
Don't let anything stop you. Follow your dreams, live the life the way you want. Life is to short to waste it. The sky is a limit.

Guide

to Cyber Sex
From a Cam Girl

LAUREN RENATO

You open your favorite messaging app to start a video call with your significant other. The line trills until you see their face emerge onto the screen in front of you. You laugh and say hello, but now what? With the constant stressors of 2020, you might find yourself too depressed or uncertain about how to tend to your relationship despite wanting to explore intimacy. Cyber sex with a partner can be overwhelming for couples camming together for the first time, with a global pandemic separating us from each other, there aren't many other opportunities to connect

I applied what I learned from years as a cam girl to my own long-distance relationship with a spouse who has traveled frequently for both military deployments and a civilian job. Although my spouse and I are quarantining together, we've spent most of our marriage navigating time apart and maintaining our sex life from a distance kept us healthier as individuals while also strengthening our bond.

If you want to try cybersex but you aren't sure how to get started, these tips will help you and your partner enjoy the experience once the camera blinks on.

Make Time for "The Talk"

Sending a few unannounced nudes won't help you get this conversation started. It's important to discuss risks, goals and boundaries before you send anything steamy. Embrace your own vulnerability by explaining why you want to try cybersex and gauge your partner's comfort level.

Honest, thorough discussions were a critical part of keeping me safe and comfortable during sex work and also ensured that we'd both find authenticity and affirmation in the encounter. Establishing goals and boundaries makes that possible and keeps everyone on the same page. It's crucial that all parties completely consent to the activities you'll pursue together and that everyone's needs are met.

Even if you have a comfortable, secure sex life together in person, your online time together will be a different experience. If you're feeling too shy or inexperienced to talk about what you're open to exploring, use Kindu or similar apps to initiate those conversations. If you've been doing this for a while, but you aren't really fulfilled by the encounters, talk about what you'd like to change.

Find an App You Both Trust

Even in a trusting relationship, sensitive data can still be leaked if someone intercepts images, videos or live feeds. You'll need to decide together if that risk influences whether you'll show your faces or private areas of your bodies on cam. To mitigate some risk, I recommend using Signal because of its end-to-end encryption and other safety features. If you're interested in incorporating toys, try Lovense, which offers interactive sex toys that allow couples to control each other's experiences from a distance. You can try other toys that offers similar features, but I like this one for its secure platform.

Choose a Comfortable Spot

And plan to be there a while. I always appreciate spending time together before getting to the deed. It's like foreplay to foreplay if we can to share a game or laugh together. Instead of hopping on camera already in the nude, treat this experience like a date. You're spending time with someone you know and care about, so make sure they know they mean more to you than the sex itself.

When it's time to get down to business, you'll have settled into your cozy nook. Check in with each other to make sure you're both ready before transitioning to intimacy. Don't be the person who just, well, whips it out unless you know you're both into that.

Spy on Each Other

If you've been at this a while or you want to be more adventurous, consider moving to a less traditional location where you can be more playful like the shower, outside in a secluded backyard or on the kitchen table with some dessert. Of course, you could interact with your partner during this time, but I think it's fun to pretend I don't even know they're watching. Bring a desk lamp with you to act as a spotlight or choose a space with natural sunlight if you want your part-

On a video chat, I once made my partner come by eating apple slices, and you could entice your partner with another sexy treat.

ner to see you well. Opt for a darker room for a grittier, voyeuristic experience.

Use More of Your Senses

Cyber sex often focuses on the sights and sounds on-screen, but it's just as important to make sure you enjoy the tastes, smells, and touch of the experience. On a video chat, I once made my partner come by eating apple slices. You could entice your partner with another sexy treat. Prepare the same meal or eat a similar dessert together if you want to feel connected. Dim the lights and light candles to set the mood for yourself. Use a clothing item that smells like your partner or order some of their signature scent to make them feel closer. Enjoy the experience as a holistic encounter if you need help feeling present or want to pamper yourselves.

Tease and Tempt

It's empowering to be a bit of a tease. Experiences where both my partner and I remain modest are often even sexier and more exciting for me. The outfits you're used to seeing each other in—lounge clothes, a work uniform or office attire—will likely feel familiar but invoke a sense of longing if you've been apart for a while.

If you prefer not to strip and show off your bodies, watch each other's lips, listen to each other's whispers and moans, and notice each other's subtle reactions in the shoulders or brows. Look right at the camera lens instead of the screen to appear as though you're gazing deeply into your partner's eyes. Bite your lip or smirk to let your partner know you're feeling naughty. The tension in these moments will help you build enough confidence to take it to the next level if you choose, but sometimes teasing is all that's needed to get off.

Try New Positions

Most men I've shared these experiences with sit at a desk or in bed with their cameras pointed at their crotch, but I'm less intrigued by someone's pumping hand. There's nothing wrong with shoving your bottom up close to the screen or highlighting other private parts if you and your partner prefer, but I long to watch facial expressions—especially a partner's eyes widening with exhilaration or closing slightly as they relax. If both partners are willing, incorporate some aspect of sharing your faces—even if it doesn't include the rest of your bodies—instead of solely swapping images of your genitals.

Your body's position will dictate how you're connecting with your partner, and it might make a big difference to both of you. Do you and your partner want an experience that's more romantic? Raunchy? Don't be afraid to request a shift in position or adjust your own camera as needed. This kind of communication is important, just like it's important to say something if a certain position, touch or rhythm isn't working when you're in person—or if you're dying to see part of your partner's body that they've been too shy to show.

If you want to direct each other, you could play a game of alternating Simon Says. Games, such as Sex Dice and Truth or Dare, will spice things up. Move around and play with the zoom as needed to show each other a new view.

Watch Yourself on Camera

I tend to keep my own camera's feed in a small box at the top center of my screen so I can keep an eye on what I look like as I also look into the lens. I feel more comfortable knowing exactly what I'm showing to my partner, and it can be fun to learn more about what my facial expressions and body look like while I'm in the zone. I suggest using this feature to help you explore your own body when you want to and hiding that view if it becomes too distracting.

Show Each Other What You Like

Although cyber sex doesn't have to be a tutorial, it's still a perfect format to show your partner how you love to be touched. Camming showed my spouse how to help me reach orgasm. I'm very familiar with my body, and a mobile camera lets me show them exactly what I want them to rub, lick or suck without the awkward fumbles of an in-person encounter. I get to say out loud what I want them to do to me without the pressure of them feeling like they need to get there now.

Avoid using yes-or-no questions to lead the conversation. Say things like, "What do you wish I could do to you right now?" and "How should I use my hands and tongue?" Explain your own needs and use this opportunity to show while you tell. This time apart will help you come back together with an even stronger connection if you use the time to share about your desires and teach each other new moves on-screen.

Cybersex doesn't have to be a tutorial, it's still a perfect format to show your partner how you love to be touched.

Playboy Interview

Erica Jong

A candid conversation with the feminist author of the erotic novel "Fear of Flying"

INTERVIEW BY **GRETCHEN MCNEESE** PHOTOGRAPHY BY **CHARLES W. BUSH**

Less than two years ago, she was known principally as a poet—one with a fondness for ampersands and startling metaphor ("& the hole in the penis/sings to the cunt") and sassy swipes at male chauvinism ("Beware of the man who praises liberated women; he is planning to quit his job"). Her poetry sold well—for poetry. Then, late in 1973, came publication of her first novel, Fear of Flying, a bawdily adulterous romp across Europe by a young woman frantically searching for sexual and emotional fulfillment, which was greeted by a chorus of rave reviews (and a gaggle of horrified ones, from critics who were turned off by the book's no-holes-barred imagery or threatened by its feminist implications). Novelist John Updike was perhaps most accurate in his prediction: "Fear of Flying," he wrote in The New Yorker, "feels like a winner." It was. Last November, Fear of Flying was issued in paperback—and immediately took off like one of the jumbo jets that so terrorized its antiheroine, Isadora Wing. At last count, the Signet softcover was in its 28th printing with more than 3,500,000 copies off the presses, had been oscillating between the number-one and number-two spots on best-seller lists for months and was the topic of heated debates at cocktail parties, consciousness-raising groups, college classrooms—and in locker rooms—throughout the country.

All of which took its author, 33-year-old Erica Jong (the J is pronounced as in John), totally by surprise. She had never expected to see the book published. (One printer, in fact, had refused to set the manuscript in type because of its considerable four-letter-word content.) Suddenly, she found herself alternately consulted as a sexual guru, solicited as a potential bedmate, sought after as a guest speaker, hailed as the most visible star in that new galaxy of liberated women writers described by Newsweek as "map makers of the new female consciousness" and, in effect, banned by the Smithsonian Institution. (Actually, it was Jong who, charging censorship, canceled a planned talk at the Smithsonian, after being advised she should avoid discussing sex and politics. It later turned out that Smithsonian secretary S. Dillon Ripley had already directed that her scheduled appearance be quashed.)

Since becoming a public personality, Jong herself has been the subject of conflicting reports: She was in a deep depression; she was bubbling with happiness. Her marriage was on the rocks; it was stronger than ever. She was writing; she wasn't. When the dust began to clear this past spring, the public learned that Erica Jong was alive and well and living in Malibu; that she and her psychiatrist husband were divorcing; that producer Julia Phillips and Columbia Pictures were planning a film version of Fear of Flying and that she had two books (Loveroot, a volume of new poems, and Here Comes and Other Poems, a collection of previously published Jong poems and essays, plus a literary-magazine interview) coming out in June. Loveroot, in fact, is a Book-of-the-Month Club alternate selection this month.

Jong is the first to admit that had it not been for her novel, her poetry wouldn't be on any book-club lists. The overwhelming success of Fear of Flying cannot, of course, be traced entirely to the book's raunchiness. One reviewer, intrigued by the F.O.F. sales phenomenon, got the names of the book's female borrowers from local libraries and queried them about its appeal. They answered, in the main, that it was a book they could relate to—often that Isadora Wing was expressing thoughts and feelings they had previously believed were theirs alone. Surprisingly enough, many male readers agreed. As Christopher Lehmann-Haupt of The New York Times wrote: "I can't remember ever before feeling quite so free to identify my own feelings with those of a female protagonist—which would suggest that Isadora Wing, with her unfettered yearnings for sexual satisfaction and her touching struggle for identity and self-confidence, is really more of a person than a woman."

There were minority opinions, some expressed stridently. Novelist Bill Brashler called it "a thoroughly obnoxious book. I read about 60 pages and then threw it against the wall." Militant feminists have damned Isadora for the fact that despite all her struggles toward self-assertion, she still depends on men to give her self-assurance. They call the ending of the book—when a confused Isadora returns, albeit rather tentatively, to her husband—a cop-out. Its author has an answer for that one; the book was intended, she says, to be "a saga of unfulfillment." To find out what all the fuss is about, PLAYBOY sent Senior Editor Gretchen McNeese to California to determine whether Jong is really, as she herself once worried aloud, the "matron saint of adulteresses" or whether she is, as her pen-and-pun pal Louis Untermeyer, the poet, claims, "just a nice Jewish girl." McNeese's report:

"When I arrived in California, I found my subject in a dither. The concrete floor of the Malibu beach house in which she lives with writer Jonathan Fast was at the moment being jack-hammered into shards, the better to afford access to an odoriferously leaking sewage-disposal pipe underneath. Writer Henry Miller, with whom Erica shares a sort of mutual-admiration society, had taken her and Jon into his home in nearby Pacific Palisades to await plumbing repairs.

"Despite it all, Erica welcomed me graciously when I called at Miller's to pick her up. Everybody describes her as plump; I thought her round-faced but shapely. Her nearsighted, blue eyes are partly hidden by enormous, pink-tinted glasses that she pushes up into her thick shock of tawny-blonde hair when she's having her picture taken. I found her soft-spoken and articulate; she talks with vitality, in well-constructed paragraphs scarcely interrupted by the y' knows and uhs that clutter most people's speech.

"Our first session took place in my motel room, but by the following day, the beach house was sufficiently restored for us to meet there. It sits high on a bluff overlooking the Pacific and one wall is a wide expanse of glass; the effect is something like that of being in the wheelhouse of an enormous ocean-going vessel, setting sail for the Orient. In the living area, there's a jungle of philodendrons, rubber plants and other vegetation, illuminated by skylights. To one side is a kitchenette in which Erica brewed pot after pot of coffee to fuel our conversation. On the counter, awaiting a quick pickup game, lay a Frisbee. On the other side of the house is the bedroom, dominated by a king-sized water bed; outdoors, there is a small Jacuzzi bath.

"As we talked, we could hear the rapid tattoo of Jon's typewriter; he was completing a draft of his first novel. (He recently sold a story for a made-for-TV movie, Everybody's Watching, to—coincidentally—Playboy Productions.) Occasionally, he'd take a break, joining us for a joke or a sandwich or serenading us with a few strums on his banjo.

"Erica seems to attract devoted, not to say fiercely loyal, friends. One such, writer Alice Bach—whose stories for 'young adults' are as different from Fear of Flying as is Little Women—was asked by a women's magazine (which she declines to identify) to do an exposé on Jong. She refused, reporting that there was nothing to expose. Another New York friend, Grace Darling—Foreign Affairs advertising director and the person who first brought Erica's work to the attention of publisher Holt, Rinehart & Winston—observes: 'We all miss her terribly. It's as if the light went out when she left New York. But then, everyone who meets Erica loves her.'

"Which may well be true. It's certainly true that everyone who hasn't met Erica but has read Fear of Flying wonders about the odd coincidences, if, indeed, they are coincidences, between the author and her novel's principal character, Isadora Wing. Both grew up in artistic, relatively affluent Manhattan families. Both are Phi Beta Kappa graduates of Barnard who went on, almost, to earn doctorates in literature at Columbia. Both are blonde poets; they write, in fact, the same poetry. Both have been married twice: first to a college sweetheart who had a nervous breakdown, then to a Chinese-American child psychiatrist with a monosyllabic surname. Just how autobiographical is Fear of Flying? I decided I'd ask."

PLAYBOY: This is the question everybody's asking, so let's get it over with: How much of Fear of Flying's Isadora Wing is really Erica Jong?
JONG: You mean will the real Isadora Wing stand up? Or lie down—preferably on the analyst's couch? Sure, there's a lot of me in Isadora, but a lot of characters and events in the book are totally invented. I didn't set out to write autobiography; I set out to write a satirical novel about a woman in search of her own identity, and I did not stick to facts very closely—frequently not at all. There never was an actual odyssey across Europe, for example.
PLAYBOY: Isadora's Chinese-American psychiatrist husband, Bennett Wing, seems to have been modeled on your own husband.
JONG: You said it, I didn't.
PLAYBOY: But was there really an English analyst like the one with whom Isadora ran off?
JONG: Hmmmm. Well, there are any number of impotent Englishmen to choose from. The one I chose was lucky—though I don't suppose you could call him a lucky stiff. At any rate, I doubt that this character would recognize himself.
PLAYBOY: Are the people who did recognize themselves in your book still speaking to you?
JONG: More than ever. People love any kind of immortality, from scratching their names on a wall to being depicted in a novel, even satirically. The friends who have been most incensed with me are those who

can't hallucinate themselves into the book at all. They've complained, "Didn't I make any impression? I wasn't in that book!" I've heard many guesses at each character in Fear of Flying, and most of them were completely wrong. They were people I'd never even met or heard of. So I'm constantly explaining to people that what I write is an admixture of reality and fantasy, and that I mix it up as I please—to elevate it to myth, hopefully. Sometimes when I finish writing, I can't even remember what actually happened and what didn't. But I guess there are people who can't make the distinction between writing and life or between autobiography and myth.

PLAYBOY: We've heard that you've been annoyed with people who can't make that distinction—who expect the real Erica to be an easy lay because the fictional Isadora is so openly sexual. Is that true?

JONG: Oh, yes; I found that very unnerving at first, having men sort of sidle up to me and proposition me, thinking that because I put myself on paper in a certain kind of way, I'm available to anybody who asks. I remember one night before I went to the American Booksellers Convention, I asked Anne Sexton, who was a good friend, "What do I do when men come up to me on the convention floor and say, g'Hey, baby, I want a zipless fuck'?" And Anne said, "Thank them. Thank them and say, 'Zip up your fuck until I ask for it.'"

PLAYBOY: The zipless fuck—a quickie with a total stranger, without even having to unzip—is Isadora's most notorious fantasy. Is it one you share?

JONG: I don't happen to be in search of ziplessness at this point in my life. I certainly had those fantasies, when I was 23 or 24 years old, of wanting anonymous sex. Or thinking I wanted it. But, of course, whenever it was offered to me, or when I would wake up in bed with somebody who was unspeakably idiotic, I would think, who needs it? Probably the zipless fuck is better as a fantasy than as a reality.

PLAYBOY: Fantasy or reality, the zipless fuck is a phrase you're likely to be stuck with the rest of your life.

JONG: Well, zippers are always getting stuck.

PLAYBOY: There's even a zipper on the cover of Fear of Flying's paperback edition. And a navel, which is also on the cover of your first book of poetry, Fruits & Vegetables. Do you have a belly-button fixation?

JONG: Do you think the publishers think of me as a navelist rather than a novelist? You should have seen the original design for the softcover edition of Fear of Flying. It showed a Happy Hooker type lady sitting in the crack formed by the parted zipper, wearing a flimsy sort of Erskine Caldwell blouse and sucking her finger. She looked like a very tacky version of the Cosmopolitan girl, actually. The cover that was used seemed tasteful by comparison.

PLAYBOY: But that kind of cover sells books. So does sex inside. What do you say to people who accuse you of having put sex into your novel just to sensationalize it, to boost sales?

JONG: That's the kind of easy, top-of-the-head response I get from not very thoughtful people. It is not the response that I get from my mail. What I get from readers very often is, "Why did they put this sexy, lurid cover on your book? Why is your book sold as a sex book? Your book is really about identity, about a woman finding herself. The sex is incidental; the sex is part of identity."

When I was writing Fear of Flying, I didn't think it would ever be published. To me, the important thing about this book was that it be honest about everything—about being Jewish in Germany, about wetting your pants when you get sexually excited, about all areas of life. That's the theme that runs all through my work, and sex is just one tiny part of that. It isn't all of life, but it is a part of life, and I always find it astounding when people concentrate only on the sex in my work.

PLAYBOY: But it has been promoted as sexy, hasn't it?

JONG: Oh, the logistics of mass-market publishing are such that a paperback publisher, like a movie company, needs a handle to advertise something by. New American Library saw my book as the first breakthrough novel about female sexual fantasies. Publishing is a faddish business; and after Nancy Friday's book My Secret Garden, sexual fantasies were, excuse the expression, hot. So that's the handle N.A.L. used for its sales force. After all, every product needs a handle in our consumer culture. I mean, nobody says PLAYBOY is the magazine that publishes John Cheever or John Updike, though I know that every time I turn to PLAYBOY, I can find a new short story I'll want to read. PLAYBOY is known as the magazine with the nude centerfold.

PLAYBOY: How do you feel about the nude centerfold? Some outspoken liberationists have complained that it exploits women.

JONG: No, I don't think they're being exploited, but they're not really women to me, they're almost figments of the imagination, sort of the apotheosis of the male mammary dream. I think they have a kind of fantasy value.

PLAYBOY: Could you fantasize being one?

JONG: Never—but then, I've always found my distinction in another area. If all I had to recommend me was the decorative value of my body, perhaps I would want that form of recognition. But I must say, I'm glad I don't have to get what I get in the world through my looks, because that's such an ephemeral kind of success, the kind that makes you fear your 30th birthday. But about the centerfold, I have no real objections to it. I recently learned, by reading between the lines of your Mel Brooks interview, that men all over America jerk off into it, and now that I know this, I think it serves a useful social function. "Redeeming social value," as they say.

PLAYBOY: We don't have any research to substantiate that finding, so we'll change the subject. There seems to be little doubt that the ways men and women deal with each other are changing. What do you see as the most important changes in relations between the sexes?

JONG: Is that like asking, "What relations between men and women would I take to a desert island?"? I do see certain definite trends: One of them is that women are becoming increasingly independent economically. So they are in a position to choose men not out of desperate need for a social rudder or an economic supporter but out of their own desire for companionship, for friendship, for love, for sex. That time has come for only a fraction of women, self-supporting professional women. It has come for me. But when it comes for most women, we'll see great changes, because women will not put up with the stuff they've put up with for centuries.

PLAYBOY: What kind of stuff?

JONG: Being nursemaids to their men; taking what is dished out to them; being chief cook and bottle washer, baby sitter, nanny; entertaining the husband's guests, the whole servant-master relationship.

PLAYBOY: What about those women who are content with that conventional husband-is-boss relationship? Would you criticize them for that?

JONG: No, but I would hazard a guess from the mail I've gotten that many women who are in that kind of situation don't want to be, that they

"In one sense, the men who fear women's liberation are right. The women's movement is going to take something away from them—the right to be masters in a master-slave relationship."

are chafing in it. And, in that sense, the men who fear women's liberation are right. The women's movement is going to take something away from them—the right to be masters in a master-slave relationship. If you can conceive of relations between people only in that way, certainly you would much rather be the master than the slave. It's very tempting for me, too, at times. I mean, there have been times in my life when I've thought, God, wouldn't it be great to have a man at home who would be faithful, be there all the time, and I could run around and do what I wanted and still come back to this person?

PLAYBOY: Every woman should have a wife?

JONG: Yes. At times, I've fantasized about having the kind of relationship with a man that men have always had with women. But if you really stop and think about what that implies of your view of the other person, it's not so terrific. I frankly think that, for all the difficulties inherent in it, it's much better to have a relationship between two equals. So if men are losing some of their old prerogatives, I think they're gaining something better. But it's hard to convince them, sometimes.

PLAYBOY: Some psychologists speculate that many men are so threatened by these changes that they've become impotent. Have you run into many guys who can't get it up?

JONG: Isadora experiences that in the novel, but I haven't. I have had men say to me, "I'm afraid I would be impotent with you, because you are who you are." But it doesn't happen. In fact, one of the things that men often tell me is, "I'm so surprised that you're unthreatening. I'm so surprised that you're feminine. That you're warm. That you're funny. That you're cuddly." I don't know why they're surprised. I guess they make the assumption that a woman who is successful is going to be a ball breaker. It's not my fault that they have that crazy response. That's what the culture feeds them, that a successful woman must have become successful by being a ball breaker. This assumption does not exist about men. It's considered perfectly natural for a man to be businesslike, efficient, competent at what he does, without that going against his masculinity. But if a woman is good at what she does, and is strong-minded and determined, then it's assumed that in some way she must be unfeminine.

PLAYBOY: Have you, like Isadora, found yourself using your sexual wiles to get something you want out of a man?

JONG: I've never slept with an editor in order to get my work published or anything like that. But I've thought of it. And I'm sure I've done a lot of eyelash batting and handholding and kissing people on the cheek rather more warmly than I have meant it; everyone has. I was told, for example, that one woman author, when she was on a publicity tour, slept with all the book salesmen and that they'd never had it so good. I have no particular moral objections to that, but I would be incapable of doing it.

PLAYBOY: Germaine Greer, in her PLAYBOY Interview, says that any coercion of women for sexual purposes, even if it isn't violent, is rape. "If a man takes you out on a motorway and stops the car and says, 'Now you can walk or fuck,' and you fuck, then you've been raped," she claims.

JONG: She's right. I think women frequently feel they have to give sexual favors to get ahead. Women still have to take crumbs of power from men, so what do they do? A lot of things they wouldn't ordinarily do, and sometimes those things imply a kind of sexual submission—pleasing, Uncle Tomming, niggering it up, pretending to ideas they don't really hold. Maybe Germaine Greer would call that mental rape, and maybe she would be right. Example of mental rape: women who will not sign a political petition for fear that their husbands might not agree with it. There are such women. I was shocked to discover that there were.

PLAYBOY: Are you politically oriented yourself? We recall that Isadora refuses to pet with boys who like Ike.

JONG: I care about politics, but I don't do enough about it. As for Isadora and Ike, that was true in my own life, only with me it was Nixon. I made it Ike in the book because it sounded more euphonious. I remember once back around 1955, when a prep school boy took me out in his car, and we went up to a secluded street in Riverdale and started necking. Then he said something about how Nixon was his ideal and I said, "Take me home." I was completely turned off

PLAYBOY: You rejected him, then. Gay Talese, who has been studying modern American sexual lifestyles for a proposed book, has stated that women don't fear rejection as men do. Do you agree?

JONG: I like Gay, but I disagree with that statement completely. Women are very afraid of rejection. I think what Gay means is he thinks a woman can always get laid, whereas a man can't. I was at a party once where he asserted: "Any woman in this room could go out onto any street corner and get laid in half an hour, whereas I don't believe any man in this room could." And the men in that room were all very attractive. But if what he said is true, so what? Who wants to get laid in just half an hour? And who wants it on the street?

Women are very afraid of rejection. The rejection of not getting the telephone call, not being asked out, is just as bad as the rejection of being turned down for sex. But, you know, men are afraid of loneliness, too. I've seen men who fall apart more after a divorce than women do; men who have absolutely gone bananas when they've been left. I don't see vast psychological differences between the sexes. I'm not saying there are no differences; I believe there are. But I think it would be much healthier for us all to stress the similarities.

PLAYBOY: What are some of the differences you do believe in?

JONG: Well, I think men are truly afraid of castration, in a way that is symbolic and also affects their daily lives. I believe women are stronger, more resilient emotionally and physically, partly because they are not coddled in the way that men are. They have to take care of everybody, and that makes for incredible toughness

PLAYBOY: Another male fear, you claim in your novel, is that women are talking about them. You wrote: "Men have always detested women's gossip because they suspect the truth: Their measurements are being taken and compared." Is that really true?

JONG: My friends tend to be very explicit—at least with me. We talk endlessly about men in bed and their dimensions and how they fuck. I think if men ever heard the things we say to one another, they'd wilt.

PLAYBOY: Like what?

JONG: Oh, I've had long conversations with women friends about the anatomies and techniques of various lovers: What shape was his penis? How long did it take him to come? I know that women aren't supposed to talk like that, but to my knowledge, they do it much more than men. A lot of very sensitive men have complained to me, as a matter of fact, that they don't have as close relationships with their men friends as I do with my women friends.

PLAYBOY: Is that because of the old homosexuality bugaboo?

JONG: Buggery-boo, you should say. Yes, I think it is. I think it's also that they're very afraid of showing weakness in front of one another. Men construe intimacy as weakness. That's part of the sexist brainwashing our society subjects men to.

PLAYBOY: How about some of the other things our society lays on men? We hear a lot of talk that a woman should be free to choose between a career outside the home and a life as a housewife. Very few men have such a choice; they are expected to support at least themselves, if not a family.

JONG: I know lots of women who have absolutely no qualms about supporting a man, who do it and feel no conflict. I will tell you that I do not know very many men who can take it.

PLAYBOY: Why not?

JONG: It's not because women won't let them but because a man's identity in this culture depends so much on his profession, his monetary status, the plastic credit cards in his wallet, that most men cannot do without these props.

PLAYBOY: You've said that a great deal of your own identity comes from your professional accomplishments. If you had to identify yourself—introduce yourself to a stranger, say—without reference to your work, how would you do it?

JONG: That's really a very interesting question. Almost impossible, isn't it? Hmmm. I would probably say that I like to laugh a lot, that I'm a clown, which I tend to be; that I'm prone to put on weight; that I'm quite horny

PLAYBOY: Does it surprise people when you admit to them that you're quite horny?

JONG: It surprises me to discover it about myself. I don't know if I'm hornier than other people, but I think I may be more in touch with my sexual feelings. My life seems kind of incomplete if there isn't a sort of sexuality in it. I don't mean random, promiscuous sexuality. I'm not interested in that. What I mean is that unless there is a person to whom I am attached, feel warmly toward and have good sex with, I feel that my life is really truncated. It's an important component in my life that I don't like having to do without.

PLAYBOY: Linda Lovelace prescribes daily orgasms for everybody. Otherwise, she says, people get very uptight. Do you buy that?

JONG: I don't know whether you have to have an orgasm every day, although it would be, certainly, very nice. I hate to quantify, because then people who read this are going to say, "Oh, my God, I didn't have one today!" Sort of like taking your vitamins. Or like those marriage manuals you used to see that said no orgasm is a good orgasm unless it's simultaneous with your partner's. That has fucked up more people than anything. That is the biggest, silliest myth. I mean, sometimes they are simultaneous, they just happen to be, and that's fine. But if you're thinking about it, it won't happen.

I do think one's feelings about orgasm are completely variable. Certainly there are times when, if you really love somebody, you can get totally into the idea of giving pleasure. This may sound like something that goes against all kinds of feminist beliefs, but a man can do it as well as a woman; I mean, there are times when you just want to give the other person pleasure. If it's consistently like that, then there's something wrong with the relationship. The fun in fucking is the variety.

PLAYBOY: Any particular variations you enjoy?

JONG: No, all kinds, I think. I like gentle sex, but I also like tough sex sometimes. I can get enormously turned on by being dominated in bed, although I would hate being raped. Sometimes I like to be the one who's active, absolutely driving the man wild, while he's relatively passive. Or you can both be equally active. I think it's nice to do it in all different positions, different ways, including hanging from the chandelier.

PLAYBOY: Have you ever tried it hanging from the chandelier?

JONG: No. And this house has no chandeliers. But I can heartily recommend sunken bathtubs, Jacuzzis, water beds.

PLAYBOY: Do you ever fuck outdoors?

JONG: A lifelong New Yorker? Fucking outdoors? Where? In Central Park?

PLAYBOY: Maybe you'll have more opportunity here in California. Speaking of fucking, what's your opinion of the diagnosis often made by men that all some women need is a good fuck?

JONG: A lot of men need a good fuck, but they're incapable of getting it because they regard their penises as sort of detached from the rest of their bodies. I think there are very few people who know how to get a good fuck, getting on that subject.

PLAYBOY: OK, how does one get a good fuck?

JONG: I think probably the essence of it is understanding that your body and your head are connected. The trouble with most people is that they're too focused on their genitals. I really think that's what makes some men bad lovers. There are certain men who will always grab for the clitoris, you know, massage it and then thrust home and that's it. And there are other men who—this is terrible—never take off their pajama tops while screwing. There are others who never take off their socks. There are others who never take off their glasses. Now, this bespeaks fragmentation. These men think sex is all in the genitals. There are other men who, immediately after having made you come, zing out, withdraw, roll over and go to sleep. For good sex, you should take time with it; treat it as something that's important, that you're not ashamed of, that is fun. Rolling around on the floor, licking apple butter off each other, if that's what you dig.

PLAYBOY: There's a lot of licking in your poems, isn't there?

JONG: Yes. Well, I'm a very oral person. I like licking a lot.

PLAYBOY: Licking or being licked?

JONG: Both. I also like barking.

PLAYBOY: Barking?

JONG: Arf! Arf! What I mean by barking is a certain kind of playfulness. Bed should be a place where you can to some extent regress and be childlike and funny and totally relaxed, and that relaxation can take any form, from making jokes to crawling around on all fours and barking like a dog. I think if adults don't have certain areas in their lives in which they can be playful, they crack after a while. And one of those areas, to me, is sex.

PLAYBOY: Have you always felt that way?

JONG: To some extent, yes, but I feel freer, better about my own sexuality at this point in my life than I ever have.

PLAYBOY: Are you saying that you felt bad about sex previously?

JONG: Oh, I think it's very clear in all my writing that for a long time I thought having pleasure was something to feel guilty about. My own adolescent sexual experience was fraught with guilt. I truly believed I was the only person in the world who ever masturbated, who ever finger fucked. I think I discovered masturbation to orgasm when I was about 13, and I was sure nobody else had ever done it.

PLAYBOY: Do you get off as well with masturbation as with intercourse? Or do you agree with another Greer dictum, that "a clitoral orgasm with a full cunt is nicer than a clitoral orgasm with an empty one"?

JONG: I much prefer an orgasm with a cock than without one. That's the best there is But I think the distinction between vaginal and clitoral is totally mythic. Because, as far as I can see, every orgasm starts in the clitoris and ends up in the vagina, and it doesn't matter whether the orgasm is induced by somebody manipulating the clitoris with the hand or going down on you or putting his penis inside you. It was Freud who decided there were two kinds of orgasm. What did he know? He wasn't a woman. I would love to get him back here and ask him to explain it.

PLAYBOY: Demonstrate it?

JONG: God, no. Just explain. He said that a clitoral orgasm was im-

"My friends tend to be very explicit—at least with me. We talk endlessly about men in bed and their dimensions. I think if men ever heard the things we say to one another, they'd wilt."

mature and a vaginal orgasm was mature, and I think he probably meant that a woman who got satisfied by having a penis inside her was more "mature" than a woman who got satisfied by having her clitoris rubbed. What he was really saying was that whatever is good for men is "mature." I think the whole fuss is totally without foundation.
PLAYBOY: Some women swear they get their best orgasms with vibrators.
JONG: Really? Warm flesh is nicer.
PLAYBOY: Is it true, as reported in Newsweek, that some San Francisco sculptor sent you a marble penis?
JONG: It was a sculptor from Los Angeles and he sent me a marble penis to be used as a dildo.
PLAYBOY: Did you?
JONG: Marble makes a very cold dildo. But you know how it is with writers—anything for research.
PLAYBOY: How big was it?
JONG: About life-size
PLAYBOY: Now we get into the whole thing about prick size. Does it really matter?
JONG: Well, I remember in college they used to say it's not the size but the stroke. My personal suspicion is that it's both the size and the stroke, but any answer to that question is going to make men all over America feel terrible—because every man has a subjective view of the size of his own genitals. Most men are going to tend to feel inferior, even if they are in fact well endowed.
PLAYBOY: As women are self-conscious about their breast size?
JONG: Exactly. I always thought that I had very small breasts, but I've been told by a number of men that, while they're not enormous, they're a pretty respectable size.
PLAYBOY: Did you ever want big jugs?
JONG: Who didn't? But the nice thing about mine is they stand up
PLAYBOY: Women's libbers are sometimes described as bra burners. Do you see any connection between liberation and brassieres?
JONG: None at all. I rarely wear a bra myself. I frequently go without any underwear at all. But I can get into stuff like Frederick's of Hollywood lingerie for fun. I enjoy wearing makeup; I like sexy clothes. I don't think that's a true feminist issue at all. And no bras were ever burned by anyone, in fact. That's a media myth one of many used to discredit feminism, or any revolutionary movement.
PLAYBOY: You have, whether you've intended to or not, been taken up as something of a guru by elements of the feminist movement. Do you see other feminist issues as bogus?
JONG: No, but I do get pissed when certain famous feminists say, "No more alimony" or "no more child support." They don't know what it's like to be 38 years old and have three kids, never to have graduated from high school or college, to have devoted your whole life to helping your husband up the corporate ladder, and then have him walk out with somebody else. I feel I'm in a privileged position in currently making a living writing, but a lot of women are not that privileged. They've spent their whole lives catering to men and children, and now they're supposed to start from scratch. It's impossible to expect that. Look there are so many ways in which successful women are discriminated against; imagine how bad it is for the average woman.
PLAYBOY: Another burning feminist issue is abortion. What's your feeling about that?
JONG: Obviously, I think women should have the right to determine whether or not they need an abortion. I mean, that should be a basic premise. I personally have a lot of negative feelings about abortion.
PLAYBOY: You mean you couldn't have one yourself?
JONG: Psychologically it would be very tough on me, because I am 33 years old and have never had a child. I never lie about my age, by the way, with the result that frequently friends of mine who are five years older than I appear to be five years younger. But things happen to women who are past 30 and have never had a child; we get kind of crazy on the subject.

Abortions—I think there will always be abortions. The question is whether there will be legal, safe abortions or back-street abortions. That's why the Right to Lifers infuriate me so. Their attempts to stamp out abortion through legal measures mean only that rich women will have safe abortions and poor women—the Puerto Ricans, the blacks, the college students—will get them on kitchen tables. Or get blood poisoning or perforated uteruses. And I think that's just unconscionable.
PLAYBOY: Before we leave the subject of the dogma of women's lib, let's bounce this statement from an unnamed male observer off you: "A feminist who admits to liking men is comparable to a Nazi leader who says he loves Jews."
JONG: I hate it when people polarize us like that. I don't see why being a feminist should be inconsistent with loving men. I suppose the trouble is that a lot of women, in order to love a man, feel they have to submerge their own identities So if they want to be themselves, they have to give up loving men.
PLAYBOY: Do such women often come on to you sexually? Have you gotten letters from women propositioning you?
JONG: No, I haven't gotten many propositions from women. I do remember getting a letter from three women who said, "Dear Erica, do you want to be made happy beyond your wildest dreams? We are dykes and we can make you happy. Please call us at such-and-such telephone number."
PLAYBOY: Did you call?
JONG: No, I never did. But I don't get many overtures like that I think probably because my work seems so heterosexual that a lesbian would assume I wasn't interested. I've been criticized for that, by the way. For example, the feminist journal Off Our Backs did a very, very vituperative review of my first book of poems, Fruits & Vegetables, and the gist of it was that the trouble with Erica Jong is that her mind's not open to bisexuality or to lesbianism. I think that's a silly criticism to make of a writer's work, to judge somebody on his or her sexual orientation.
PLAYBOY: We take it that yours is pretty exclusively heterosexual?
JONG: Well, I must say I feel there should be utter freedom for gay people, that they're unfairly persecuted. I could say to you that some of my best friends are gay, except that it would sound stupid. But I, myself, really am oriented more toward men than I am toward women.
PLAYBOY: Somehow you sound as if you're apologizing for that. Do you feel you must?
JONG: Well, in this day and age, one almost has to apologize for not being bisexual.
PLAYBOY: Do you dig photos of nude men, such as the centerfolds in PLAYGIRL?
JONG: I'm not particularly turned on by those photos, but I think that's because I look at those men and think, "God, I know how absolutely dumb he's going to be." One of the things that turn me on in men is

"I don't know whether you have to have an orgasm every day, although it would be, certainly, very nice."

intelligence.
PLAYBOY: What makes you think a man's dumb just because he poses nude? Are you really a female chauvinist prig?
JONG: Oh, those men always say they're posing to further their acting career or something. Besides, they never have erections! Real men excite me more than pictures.
PLAYBOY: What turns you on about real men besides intelligence?
JONG: Touch. And a real, live nude man walking across the room toward me turns me on immensely
PLAYBOY: Some women, to the surprise of social scientists, are now admitting that they are aroused by pornographic movies. Are you?
JONG: My reaction to porn films is as follows: After the first 10 minutes, I want to go home and screw. After the first 20 minutes, I never want to screw again as long as I live. Those endless blow jobs in slow motion, to me, are just tedious. The funniest porn film I've ever seen is one of two little girls in pigtails—they're really women of about 30, but they're dressed up as little girls in pigtails, with short skirts and knee stockings—making love to a man in an ape suit who has an enormous black-plastic penis that gets longer as they pull on it. One night I sat down with some friends in an apartment to watch some other porn films and we got so bored with running them forward that we decided to run them backward—so we could see the ejaculations returning and the cocks getting soft and the pants getting zipped.
PLAYBOY: Was that a turn-on?
JONG: No, but it was funny. None of those films was a turn-on, really. I found Behind the Green Door a turn-on for the first few minutes, but then it got repetitious.

I have been very turned on at times by erotic art, if the quality of the art is good. One thing that really turns me off is crummy prose, like you get in porn novels: "And then he pumped his hot pole into her wet pussy." It's so mechanical. Gigantic sexual organs thrusting at each other as if they didn't have people attached to them. Like those pictures in Screw.
PLAYBOY: You're not a fan of Al Goldstein's Screw?
JONG: I read your interview with Goldstein and I think he came across as a totally obnoxious human being from beginning to end. Both ends. Screw did publish a perceptive review of Fear of Flying, though. In the main, what I object to in Screw is those pictures of huge sexual organs taken out of context from the rest of the body.

You know, a friend of mine had a book of what people call wide-open beavers, crotch shots, that he got in Copenhagen. It was just page after page of cunts. A black one, a white one, a Chinese one, with garters, without garters, with crotchless panties. And they were all pretty similar. The color of the hair or the skin might be different, but they were pretty much alike. Some people apparently find this sort of thing an object of fascination. I don't.
PLAYBOY: Your heroine in Fear of Flying is certainly fascinated with the idea of looking at her own cunt.
JONG: I can't imagine anybody growing up who hasn't had the desire to see her own cunt. I certainly did; I remember in my adolescence, like Isadora, putting my head through my legs and looking at myself backward in the mirror. It was just an object of intense curiosity for me.
PLAYBOY: But not beauty?
JONG: I may be killed by the feminists for saying this, but I think many women have the basic, gut feeling that their genitals are ugly. Maybe it has to do with the fact that your cunt is hidden, that you can't see it. Maybe it has to do with the fact that it has secretions and sometimes there are odors that are not pleasant. One of the reasons I think women are very gratified by oral-genital relations is that it's a way of a man's saying to you, "I like your cunt. It's good to me. I can eat it."
PLAYBOY: Is that the idea you were expressing in Isadora's fantasy of wanting her husband to go down on her while she was having her period? Is that one of your own unfulfilled fantasies?
JONG: I don't know whether I would really want to do it, but it does seem like a tremendous pledge of love. Do you love me enough to do anything? That's really what that's about. Do you love my menstrual blood? Would you eat my shit? Stuff like that. I don't think anybody actually wants to. You just want to hear the person say, "Sure I would." Reassurance.
PLAYBOY: Isn't that some kind of power play?
JONG: No, I think it's sort of asking for acceptance. One doesn't have to go on and do it.
PLAYBOY: Wouldn't you say there is rather a lot of emphasis on menstruation in your writing — your novel and your poems?
JONG: A lot? Every 28 days. Why not? I just think that for a woman it's a very, very important thing, that rhythm of menstruation. It's a kind of connection with your own mortality. Maybe it's hard to conceive of one's own death, but I don't think it's that hard to conceive of aging, or menopause. And one thing that's absolutely finite is your childbearing capacity. So every time a woman has a period, she knows that she is 28 or 27 or whatever number of days closer to the end—menopause, aging, death. It's a kind of biological time clock, a constant reminder of mortality.
PLAYBOY: A moment ago, you referred to vaginal odors, and certainly a multimillion-dollar industry devoted to feminine-hygiene sprays and such has sprung up in recent years. Yet many women put down these products and the advertising that promotes them. Do you?
JONG: I think those advertisements are terrible. My agent called me up one day and said some company wanted me to do a commercial for cunt wipers of some sort, and I said, "Don't even tell me who they are or how much money they're offering. I don't even want to know."
PLAYBOY: Would you have been tempted by the money?
JONG: No. I was shocked that anybody would ask a writer to do something like that. Nothing would have made me do the commercial. Anyway, what's wrong with soap and water? Bring the bidet to the New World! There's another thing I've always wanted to write to The Playboy Advisor about: Okay, if you decide, as I have, that the form of contraception with the fewest side effects is the diaphragm and jelly, what do you do about oral-genital sex? The jelly anesthetizes the tongue and tastes terrible! Why don't companies come out with some kind of yummy-tasting contraceptive cream—grape flavor, maybe?
PLAYBOY: There are flavored douches and male-genital sprays on the market.
JONG: But that doesn't solve the contraceptive problem. And I really don't want to take the pill. I don't believe one should fuck up one's body with chemicals. I might take a sleeping pill occasionally, if I'm on a tour and can't relax in an unfamiliar hotel room. And I always used to carry penicillin tablets, because I have the greatest clap phobia of anybody in the world. I've always been terrified when I slept with somebody I didn't know well. I guess I'm just an alarmist, because when I travel someplace I take V-Cillin K, Lomotil and my diaphragms.
PLAYBOY: Diaphragms, plural? You have several?
JONG: A whole collection. I'm planning to send them to the Smithsonian. But although this may go against the way people see me—I haven't really done all that much sleeping around. I was always preparing for it, just in case a really terrific guy came along—carrying around diaphragms in my briefcase and stuff like that, but the number of men I've slept with in my life is very small.
PLAYBOY: How many have there been?
JONG: Not many. I don't notch my bedpost, so I don't know, exactly. I do, however, have a good imagination, and I can describe sexuality clearly
PLAYBOY: Who was your first lover?
JONG: My first husband. He was my college sweetheart, my best friend, my constant companion—a person I took courses with, long walks with, read books with, did everything with. If it had been 1968, we would have shacked up together for a year or two and that would have been it. But because it was 1963, we got married. And we were much too young and too broke.

PLAYBOY: How old were you?
JONG: He was 24 and I was 21. We were married a year and a half, and then he had a nervous breakdown. That is the part of Fear of Flying that comes closest to something that actually occurred in my life.
PLAYBOY: When did you meet your second husband, the psychiatrist?
JONG: I met him in the fall of 1965 and we were married the next year. Then I went with him to Heidelberg, where he had a three-year tour of duty with the Army.
PLAYBOY: Like Bennett Wing, in Fear of Flying. Those were three years that Isadora Wing obviously hated. Have you been accused of being too rough on the Germans in that book? And why did you, or at least Isadora, lump the Viennese in with the Germans?
JONG: I know that makes the Viennese very, very angry, but I see them as being alike, Teutonic. Both Germans and Austrians were extremely anti-Semitic.
PLAYBOY: Were you being fair to them to generalize to such an extent?
JONG: I certainly wouldn't do it if I were writing nonfiction. But because I was writing a novel in which I was talking about people's gut feelings, I think I had the right to do it. You see, I had never been particularly conscious of being Jewish. My family was cosmopolitan; nobody cared much about religion. I never had been to a synagogue. All my life, I have had friends who were not Jewish — lovers, husbands, even. But in some way, that German experience changed something inside me, in that I came to understand what it means to have an identity you would fight for, and I began to burrow into those feelings. I wrote a lot of poems in Germany, and many of them dealt with the idea of being a victim and with rage. And from that I moved into writing about female rage and all those unexpressed negative feelings I had about family, about men, and so on.
PLAYBOY: Didn't you have other means of venting your rage? Specifically, didn't you, like Isadora, undergo an extensive period of analysis?
JONG: I was in analysis for eight years. I didn't have as many analysts as Isadora did; I had three. I'm not really sure why I spent eight years in analysis; one reason was that I was married to an analyst and it seemed to be the thing to do. I was greatly helped in a lot of things by analysis, though. I did suffer from writer's block and I was terrified of flying. I'm not anymore. Analysis really did help me enormously. It freed me to write about things that matter deeply to me. If you can learn to be authentic and honest about your feelings on the couch, you can bring that authenticity into your writing.
PLAYBOY: One prominent New York psychiatrist made headlines recently when he was convicted of prescribing sexual relations for a patient, with himself as the sex partner. What's your opinion of that technique?
JONG: I'm totally against it. I think it's like child labor. Exploiting the helplessness of somebody who depends on you. When a person goes to a psychiatrist and puts his or her life in that person's hands and then gets a pass out of it, I think that's utterly immoral. And the psychiatrists who rationalize it as good for the patient are the lowest of the low.
PLAYBOY: What's it like being married to a psychiatrist?
JONG: It probably depends on the psychiatrist you're married to. They do tend to bring their work home with them, I think, and sometimes you feel you're being analyzed in the bedroom. And this sounds like a frightful generalization, but in the marriages of most psychiatrists I've known, there's an awful lot of daddy-baby stuff. The psychiatrist's wife plays a role: "Take care of me, Daddy." And the psychiatrist in turn plays a role: "I am the good daddy. I will protect you." For "protect," read: "control."
PLAYBOY: Is that what finally broke up your marriage?
JONG: It's very hard for me to talk about that marriage. But I'll say this: It was not the success of Fear of Flying that broke it up; my husband was immensely supportive of my writing, always. In fact, it was he who insisted that I use his name in my writing. I remember pointing out at a much earlier period of our lives, long before Fruits & Vegetables was published, that if I ever became a really well-known writer, it would ensure us much more privacy if I used my maiden name. But he was adamant about my using his name, Jong. He wanted this identification with me, as a bond between us—and he was relentless in his insistence. I think if he hadn't been so strong on it, I would have used my maiden name. Anyway, he was always proud of my work, proprietary, almost, and he never objected to the book. He read it all before publication and endorsed it heartily. Who can ever say why a marriage breaks up? We didn't share the same sense of humor — that's part of it.
PLAYBOY: How would you describe your sense of humor?
JONG: I see the world as a tremendous circus. I am very anti-elitist, anti-authoritarian. My real view of the world is a satirist's view, and more often than not, I find the games we play to gain status very foolish. And I want to share that laughter with somebody; I mean, I can't get on with people who take all that bullshit seriously.
PLAYBOY: And your husband did take it seriously?
JONG: Most people do, and I think he did more than I did.
PLAYBOY: Is he a Freudian analyst?
JONG: Ask him.
PLAYBOY: We wondered because Freudianism is an extremely authoritarian discipline. If you're such an anti-authoritarian, how could you ever get mixed up with a Freudian analyst?
JONG: Mixed up is the key phrase there. I don't believe in systems, and I don't believe in breaking the world down into two types of people or two types of orgasms or any of those things. I do not want anybody to feed me any kind of orthodoxy, whether it's Catholicism or Seventh-day Adventism or Calvinism or Freudianism or anything else. Doctrinaire Marxists bore me. Doctrinaire Gestalt therapists, doctrinaire sexologists bore me.
PLAYBOY: What's your opinion of Freudian theories about sexuality?
JONG: There are a number of things in Freud's writing that lead me to believe he was extremely frightened of sexuality, very hung up and guilt-ridden.
PLAYBOY: Specifically, how about one of Freud's most controversial theories: Do you believe in penis envy?
JONG: That has a certain lilt, like a singing commercial for peanut butter. No, I believe that women envy the power men have in our culture, and well we might: I don't think we literally envy the organ. We don't have to; there's so much else we can envy. We can envy the fact that men make more money; we can envy the fact that society is structured for their benefit; we can envy the fact that they can go out to restaurants unescorted without getting pinched in the ass.
PLAYBOY: We thought you liked getting pinched in the ass, or is that only Isadora's predilection?
JONG: Isadora likes it. Isadora—she's incorrigible. I like to be pinched on the ass, but only by some people. And I want to pick the people. Isadora has a lot of weird tastes that I don't share. Most of her fears, though, are mine. Or were. I've outgrown many of them.
PLAYBOY: What besides your fear of flying?
JONG: I'm no longer afraid of being alone. That panic that Isadora feels—"Oh, my God, he's going to leave me and I'll be alone" — that actually is the irrational female panic that is ground into us from our earliest days and reaffirmed during our adolescence. God forbid that you should be without a date on Saturday night! God forbid you should be alone on New Year's Eve! God forbid your man should leave you! And then you discover, well, being alone is pretty nice. I like my own company. If I don't have a date on Saturday night, I'm reading a terrific book. I'm going out with a woman friend or with a man who is not my lover but whose company I enjoy. It's not so terrible. Life goes on.
PLAYBOY: You're in the process of getting a divorce. Why do you think so many marriages are breaking up these days?
JONG: Women are tired of bending, so they break up. I think that in some cases, divorce comes about through a healthy desire to fulfill one's own individuality. In other cases, it may be part of an endless quest for what is unfulfillable anyway. The things that used to hold the family to-

gether don't exist to the extent that they did. Childbearing is optional and even if you do have children, it doesn't take the whole of your life, because one child, or two children or even three children, is not a total lifetime's work in the way that it was when women had 14 children. I mean it doesn't go on as long.

PLAYBOY: You've been quoted as saying you have finally decided you'd like to have children.

JONG: I think I would. I certainly have waited and waited, as long as one can wait; but I don't believe I will get out of my childbearing years without having at least one child.

PLAYBOY: And it doesn't matter to you whether it is born in or out of wedlock?

JONG: Not at all. I'd rather be unwed than in a state of deadlocked wedlock. I don't think marriage guarantees a woman anything she can't have outside marriage—in terms of security, child support and the like. I only wish tax and inheritance laws did not discriminate against the unmarried. Unfortunately, they do. Other than that, I can't think of any reason one should be married. What can marriage offer me? It certainly doesn't guarantee that I won't stop loving somebody nor does it ensure the continuance of a relationship. In some sense, it puts a sort of dutiful obligation on both parties that may make it harder to love freely. I'm not absolutely sure of this, but it's possible that if you feel locked together in a certain way, your love feels obligated rather than freely given. If you only live with somebody, it is taken for granted that you do so because you want to be with that person. Nothing in this world is more secure than that.

PLAYBOY: Do you agree with those who claim the trouble with modern marriage lies in the nuclear family? Would you rather live in a commune?

JONG: Boy, if I could find six people with whom I could live happily, I'd be glad to have a commune. But I think it's hard enough to live with one. It's practically a miracle when you live harmoniously with anybody. You know, theoretically I always said I would like to have a variety of people in my life, a variety of men. And yet I always wind up pretty consistently with one man and am monogamous for long periods of time. Ziplessness unzips me. Monogamy helps me work and function and write. I think it's just that there are so few people in this world whom one can really love, whom you feel that tenderness toward. It doesn't happen to me every day. More often than not, I've felt a sort of intellectual contempt for many men. I know that sounds terrible to say, but I can remember, from the time I was an adolescent, thinking, "Oh, gee, he's so attractive, but he's so stupid."

PLAYBOY: Are you saying you couldn't go to bed with a man you didn't respect?

JONG: Oh, I could and I have, but I've always felt sorry afterward. For me, it is so much better to have a warm, loving, companionable relationship.

PLAYBOY: What would you consider an ideal relationship?

JONG: I have a new love poem that expresses it. It's about giving. I think we've always been afraid that if we give too much it will turn the other person off. And sometimes it does. Unfortunately, there are a lot of men—some women, too—in this culture who are terribly afraid of commitment. But I would think that if you could find somebody who was not turned off by it, you could just sort of renew each other, and that would be life's greatest pleasure.

PLAYBOY: Isn't there a contradiction between what you've just said, about commitment and monogamous relationships, and what you, through Isadora, had to say about the excitement of being unfaithful? The eroticism of sloppy seconds, so to speak?

JONG: It's not fair to blame me, three years after writing a book, for my character's views. Sure, one of the fun things about adultery at least for a little while—is the sense that you're getting the best of two men. There you are, having a little affair and then going home to your husband; fucking two men in one day. The only trouble is it's very superficial. It really turns out you're not getting the best of either man. You're just getting a little piece—that's a pun, I guess—of both. Infidelity seems like a tremendous turn-on at times, but you really don't get much out of it It's much better to have one really rewarding relationship than to have several fragmentary ones.

PLAYBOY: Do you think total marital fidelity is possible?

JONG: I think it's unreasonable to assume that one's mate is always going to be faithful. You know that people are not going to go for 20 years without ever fucking somebody else—for whatever reason; maybe just to assert independence, to prove you aren't caged. Sometimes out of a genuine compulsion. Or overwhelming attraction. It's unreasonable to assume that there won't be such occasions. But I'm the worst person to talk about that, because I'm very jealous. I'm really fascinated with jealousy and the effect it has on a marriage. There's something of that in my new novel.

PLAYBOY: Some married couples deal with this problem by permitting a certain amount of sexual freedom. How would you feel about open infidelity? Wife swapping or consensual adultery?

JONG: I feel much less threatened by it than by secret infidelity, and I think maybe in this respect, I'm like a lot of other people. The thing that gets me the most crazy about infidelity in the way that it's practiced in a conventional marriage is the secrecy. It re-evokes all your childhood terrors about things going on between the adults behind locked doors When you find out that somebody has been cheating on you for years and that the night he was supposedly off studying for such and such he was really .. that's what makes me crazy.

PLAYBOY: You don't subscribe to the "What you don't know won't hurt you" school of thought?

JONG: No, I don't, because I've had it both ways. I would have gone along with that idea until I actually experienced it, found out that things had been going on behind my back for years. And suddenly I understood all the overheard conversations, all the little innuendoes, whose car was parked in front of whose house—all those things—and they just came down on my head with sickening force. After that, I really felt I would rather know, painful as it is. I think lying corrodes a relationship. When you start lying to each other, you start with little things, lies by omission. And the lies grow and that ruins the relationship. I would rather have things out in the open.

I don't mean that you ought to call home from a business trip and say to the man or woman you're living with, or your husband or wife, "Darling, I just slept with So-and-So." I mean, you don't do that on the telephone. You wait until you're back together and talking in a kind of loving way

PLAYBOY: What about, "Darling, I want to sleep with So-and-So"?

JONG: I honestly think that would be less threatening than keeping it a secret. But sometimes you take the steam out of the fantasy by actually speaking about it, and then you find you don't want to do it. But you see, if we all did that, there would be less fucking of other people out of rebellion and more doing it for the pure pleasure of doing it.

PLAYBOY: Do you think a lot of fucking is done out of rebellion?

JONG: Yes, absolutely, in conventional monogamous marriages. And when you read a lot of the novels of adultery that have been written by women, you see that pattern. Very often the woman finds a lover who's not nearly as good in bed as her husband. Certainly, in Fear of Flying that's the case; the woman finds an impotent lover. He can't even get it up most of the time. So what's the need that's being fulfilled by this man? It's the need for rebellion, for saying. "Look, I'll show you." And I've talked to many, many women who have had affairs—sometimes persistent, constant affairs throughout their marriages—and they tell you overwhelmingly: "My husband is really a much better lover. He satisfies me more often; I reach orgasm more often with my husband; we're more attuned to each other." And so you ask, "Well, why the lover?" And they say, "Ah, I feel great. I feel alive. I feel reborn." What is going on that makes her feel that way? It's being appreciated again, not being taken for granted, being rediscovered as an individual, being validated in the

eyes of a new man.

PLAYBOY: Do you have a need for validation in the eyes of men?

JONG: I don't believe I do, but I think that's the way many women live. I think validation comes very much from my work. But I must say that my sense of joy and of being at one with the world comes from having love in my life. I can live without it, as I said, but I really don't want to. I'm so much more crotchety when there's no man I love in my life.

PLAYBOY: In several articles that appeared earlier in the year, you were described as being depressed. Was the lack of a man in your life the real reason for that depression?

JONG: That may have been part of it, but I think mostly it was sheer exhaustion. I was inundated with mail after Fear of Flying came out, so much that I couldn't cope with it. This is something nobody can understand without going through it. Imagine opening your apartment door and finding a stack of mail that comes up to about mid-shin: four galleys in search of quotes, six books from editors saying, "Will you please write something about this?" 20 letters—15 of them from strangers, two from good friends, two or three requests for speaking engagements. It's amazing how many causes come out of the walls the minute your name becomes known. The Zionists of Upper Beverly Hills. The Feminists of Lower Mamaroneck. College Women in Search of Equal Pay. And they're all worthy causes, but nobody could keep up with them all. That was particularly difficult for me to deal with, because I'm the girl who can't say no. At first I tried to answer all the mail myself. I would categorize it, put it in big cardboard boxes: interesting fan mail, dumb fan mail, invitations to "stop for tea if you're ever passing through Secaucus."

PLAYBOY: What were some of the interesting letters?

JONG: Well, I get certain categories of letters that interest me. There's the letter of heartfelt appreciation: "Thank you very much for writing that book. You wrote about my thoughts and feelings." This type sometimes comes from a woman and sometimes from a man; almost equally from both sexes

PLAYBOY: Men identify with Isadora?

JONG: Absolutely. A lot of men are surprised when they find out that women have the same feelings they have. I don't know why they're surprised. When I was a kid and read Great Expectations, I identified with Pip. I identified with any number of famous characters from literature—Tom Jones, Robinson Crusoe, Gulliver, for God's sake. I never thought I couldn't identify with them because I was a girl. And yet it surprises men that they should pick up a book about a female and be able to identify with her. But men and women do face similar problems, like those Isadora faced: the difficulty of separating oneself from one's family, of achieving a sense of adulthood; the dilemma of wanting to be sexually free and yet wanting to be grounded in a safe, secure relationship. That's not a female thing alone. And men will say to me, "I feel just like Isadora. I feel I am Isadora." Or sometimes, "I'm glad that you wrote about the feelings of women so that I can see that my feelings are not so different. Perhaps the sexes are not as far apart as I thought." I find that kind of letter very touching.

PLAYBOY: Do you get letters that aren't so touching? Hate mail, for example?

JONG: Rarely. I once got a crazy letter from a man that said, "Dear Erica, I would like to tear your poems into little pieces and lick them off your body," which struck me as destructive, though I suppose he meant well. Perhaps the oddest letter I ever received was from a former nun who wanted me to meet a young man, perhaps have an affair with him. I think she was in love with him but didn't have the nerve to do anything about it herself and was sort of using me as an intermediary.

Other letters come from men who want to meet me. Sometimes they will say things like, "I have a wonderful 30-acre farm and I'm very wealthy. With a very long cock." No, they don't say that.

PLAYBOY: They don't?

JONG: They don't use the word cock, but sometimes they talk about what good lovers they are.

PLAYBOY: In your own writing, you call a cock a cock, but not all writers—or publishers—are so explicit. Some months ago, The New York Times printed an article by Henry Miller praising your work, and at the end there's an italicized footnote: "The Times requested and Mr. Miller consented to alterations of some of the language in this article." One of the words the Times seems to have found it necessary to excise was bastard. How did that strike you?

JONG: As absurd. They wouldn't use the word lay, either. Or horny, which I thought was even funnier. I think writers should have full linguistic—even cunnilinguistic—freedom. But there are some people who scan down a page of prose, and if there's one cunt on that page, that's all they see. It's almost as if the thing were surrounded by a neon halo. This astounds me, because swearing was never taboo for me. It always seemed like an interesting way to make language emphatic.

PLAYBOY: With freedom, linguistic or otherwise, goes responsibility. Or so we've all been lectured. Do you feel that writers bear special responsibilities?

JONG: My own, as I've said, is to be honest. Beyond that, I've always felt writers should strive to be part of the common run of humanity, that they cannot be elitist. That's what bothered me so when I started having to delegate things, hire a secretary, get an answering service, retain an agent. I had always answered my own phone, my own mail. And I had to sort of reshuffle my head, tell myself, "OK, it's not terrible to have an answering service, to pull the phone plug out. You're still a nice girl." Once I made those decisions—and got out of New York I felt much better.

PLAYBOY: Why did you have to get out of New York? What's a nice girl from Manhattan doing in a place like Malibu?

JONG: Hmmm. That's another whole book. I often wake up in the morning and don't know why the hell I'm in Malibu or how I got here. I think I'm probably a diehard New Yorker and that New York is so in my blood that I can't survive for too long away from it. But it was really getting to me. I used to think that writers who said they couldn't function in New York were being phony, because I wrote four books in New York. I had never anticipated what happens when you have a best seller, that you are suddenly on tap for the entire world. So it became necessary for me to get out of New York. I don't know if Malibu will become a permanent place for me. I somehow doubt it, but who can tell? Right now, I'm feeling more like a gypsy than ever before in my life. I have never had so few possessions as I have right now. I have three cartons of books and papers and four suitcases. I bought a portable typewriter and a couple of reading lamps at Sears Roebuck. Everything else is either borrowed or rented.

Actually, this is the first time in my life I've tried to live for myself Simply. Not to worry about things, or about what people think of me, whether I'm pleasing people or not. Being able to choose my friends from among people I really love. To be with a man I really love, somebody to whom I am extraordinarily close, with whom I can spend hours talking, giggling, laughing and kidding around, flinging jokes back and forth.

PLAYBOY: We assume you're talking about Jonathan Fast, the writer with whom you're sharing a home in Malibu.

JONG: Right. I think when I first met Jon, I had the sense that I was living with my other half, a sense I'd never had with another man, ever that this was the other side of my personality. We are not exactly alike, but there is this tremendous kind of sharing of a way of looking at the world.

I had always assumed that men and women were sort of adversaries in a relationship, probably because of the experience I'd had before. The idea of living with someone without that sort of plea bargaining and competitive strife—I was astounded to find that that kind of a relationship could exist. I had convinced myself it was impossible and unfindable. But it's not. And that's a delight, I must say. We support each other in our work, too. Jon pushes me to work; he's much more disciplined in his writing habits than I am.

Miranda
FOUNTAIN

@mirandaolivia3

Photography by **Ryan Dwyer | @letshoot**
PR by **@mainstreetproductions**

By **Samantha Jack**

Such an honour to have a gorgeous and talented beauty feature! We're curious to know how your journey has been as one of the most respected models in your industry. It has been so fun getting the opportunity to work with so many talented photographers! I am so grateful to have this opportunity.

Given your obvious stunning good looks and striking features, tell us a bit about where you're from? I am from a very small town in South Georgia. I grew up in the middle of nowhere, it was beyond boring! My mother and her family moved from the Ukraine, so I am actually the first generation born here in the United States...I definitely inherited a few of the Ukrainian physical features.

Tell us something surprising about you? Despite my outgoing persona that I may put off, I am actually very shy and love to stay at home. You'll never catch me out partying and I really enjoy staying in on a Saturday night...or just getting some delicious food and walking my dogs.

2020 was an incredibly challenging for all us, what would say has been the most challenging thing for you thus far? The most challenging part of last year was having my lipsticks collect dust in a drawer...All jokes aside, it was most difficult to not be out and about in California for months on end. I am so blessed to live in such a beautiful city, I cannot get enough of exploring new places I haven't been to yet!

What are some of the things you like to do, behind the cameras and all the glitz and glamour? It isn't a secret that I love to get dolled up and look my best, I think most women enjoy looking nice. California is famous for its weather, so a hike outdoors is one of my favorite ways to kill a few hours. I also really love volunteer work...as generic as it sounds, I absolutely love helping others simply because I know how a simple act of kindness can really impact a person, or animals, life.

If we were to try and sweep you right off your feet, what are some of the things you look for in an ideal partner? I really love when someone is genuine and can have a meaningful conversation with me naturally. Sure, a hot body is great...but a kind heart and a good conversation are the key to making me want to know more about you.

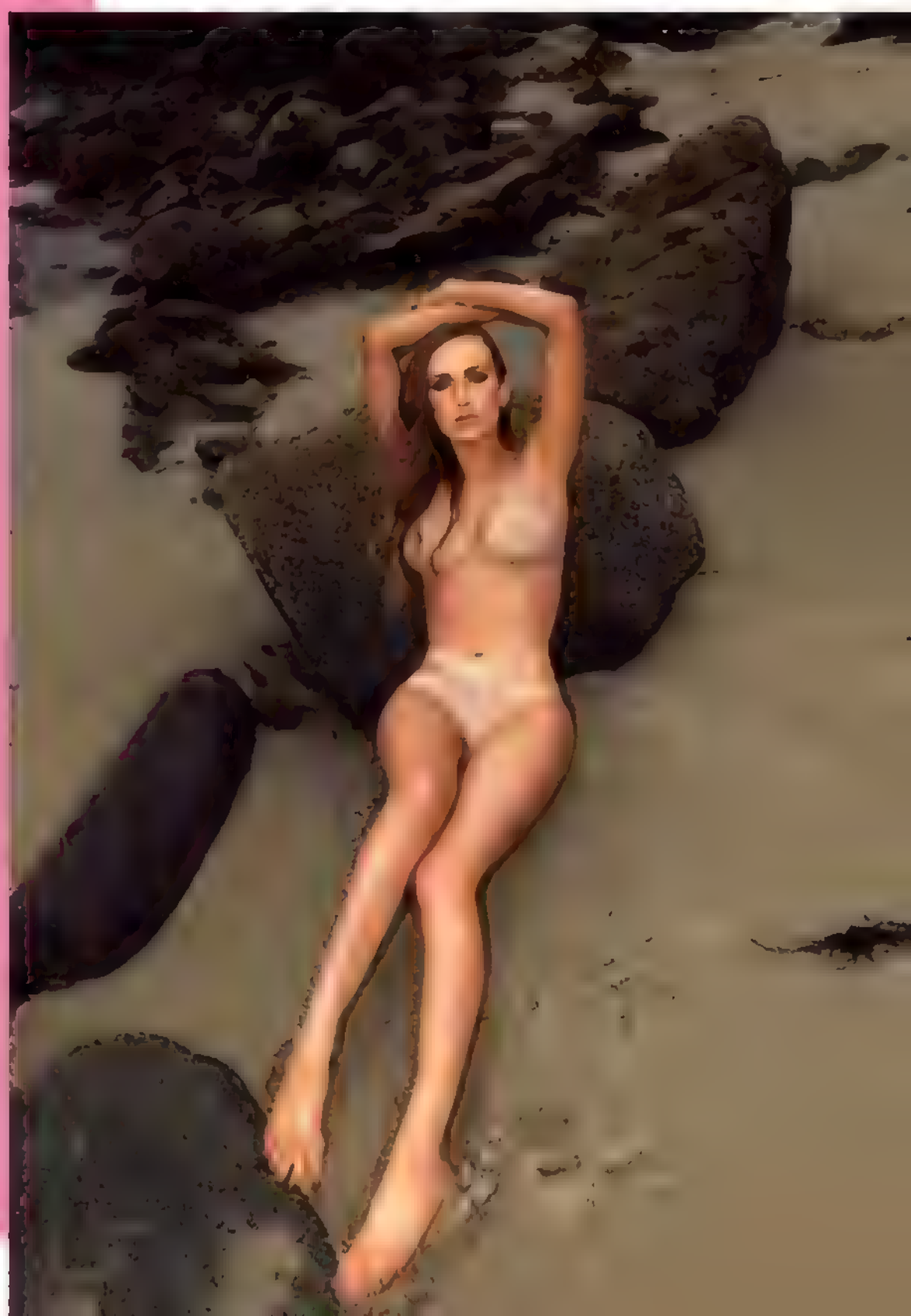
..And what would make you go running in the opposite direction as fast as possible? One of my least favorite things about meeting a guy is when they feel the need to show off or try and buy my attention. I can have just as good of a time driving around while drinking coffee, getting to know each other..rather than over a fancy, overpriced dinner.

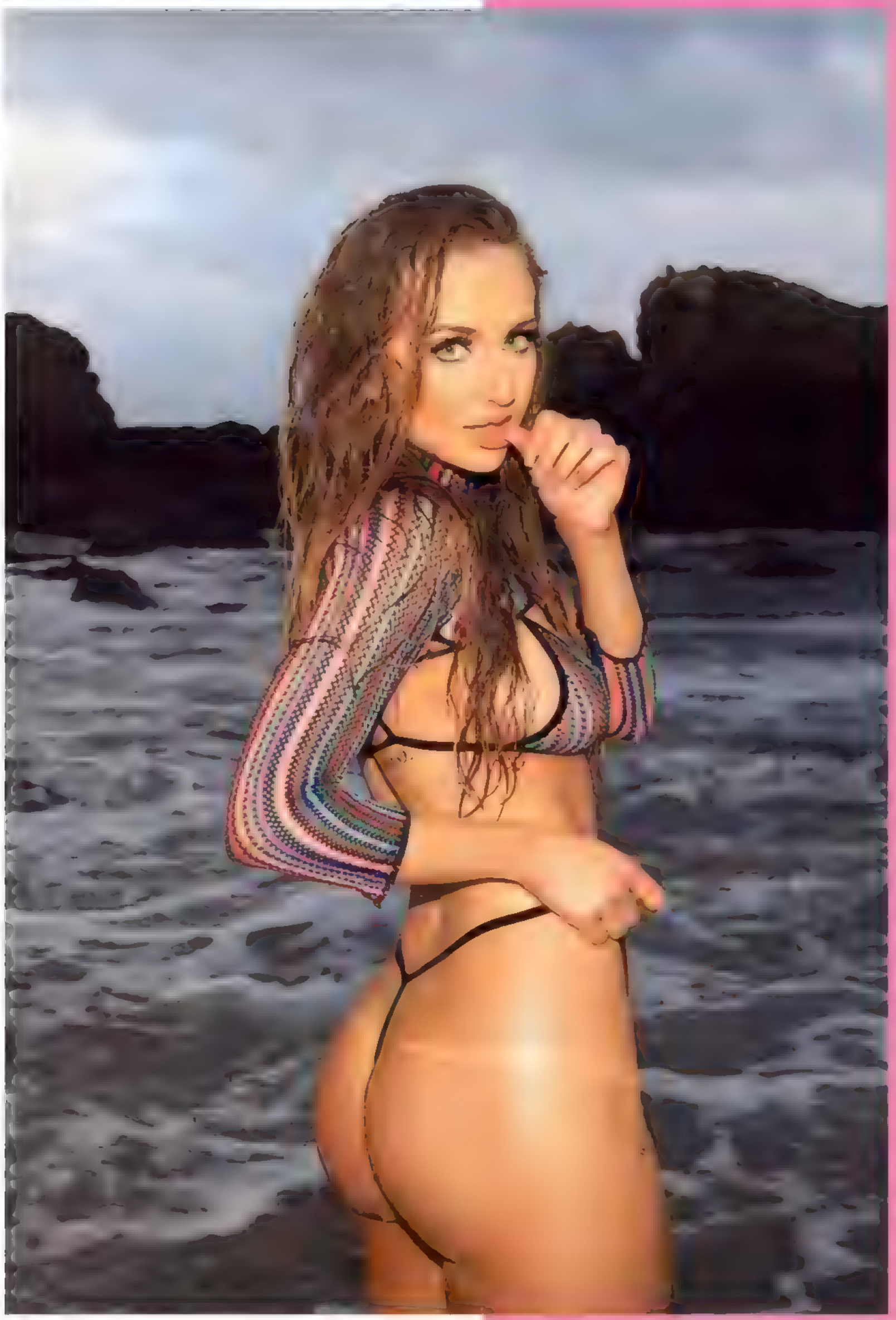
You're a seemingly talented lady, what are some, if any, of your hidden talents not many people know about? I am an excellent sales person, I can persuade someone to do almost anything.

What makes you feel sexy? I feel sexiest when I am achieving the goals I have laid out for myself. For example, doing a photoshoot for Playboy! I couldn't feel any sexier than I do when I am flipping through the pages of this month's issue looking at how far I've come as a model.

If you could have any superpower in the world, what would it be and why? To eat anything I want, all the time, without it being unhealthy. Fries, hot wings, ice cream, ribs, chocolate cake...that would be amazing!

What can we expect from you this year? Any major plans and exciting things we can look forward to from you? I plan to provide consistently great, creative photos this upcoming year.





THE DOPE TUTOR ANSWERS:

WHAT DOES WEED LAW HAVE TO DO WITH RACISM?

BY **ANDREW DEANGELO** ILLUSTRATION BY **RICHARD A. CHANCE**

The history of cannabis law in America is one of injustice, with people of color bearing the brunt of a system weighted against them

As with many things in America, the cannabis experience for white people has been different from the cannabis experience for people of color. White citizens have used and traded cannabis at nearly the same rates as Black and Brown people, but Black and Brown people have been arrested nearly four times as often. In most cases, people of color have done jail time while people like me were able to grow wealth in the cannabis industry—both underground and, more recently, legally. There is no doubt that the color of my skin has given me untold advantages others do not enjoy.

The racist history of federal cannabis prohibition in the United States is the subject of Fab 5 Freddy's Netflix documentary masterpiece Grass Is Greener. With his cast of musical icons, the filmmaker exposes the story of how mid-level bureaucrat Harry J. Anslinger ascended to be the nation's first drug czar on the backs of Black jazz musicians and Brown citizens, a tale both shocking and unsurprising for 1930s America. F

or 30 years Anslinger promoted racist propaganda and policy that resulted in much higher rates of drug-related arrests and imprisonment for people of color. Then in 1970 President Richard Nixon, another racist in a position of great power, launched the Controlled Substances Act, famously classifying cannabis as a Schedule 1 drug so he could go after his two biggest enemies, Blacks and hippies, and the DEA was born. Old Anslinger even came out of retirement for the ceremony.

"It was never about the cannabis," Freddy tells me, "but about the people who were using it, plain and simple."

Cannabis prohibition was really just a war on people of color, another way to rob them of opportunity and justice.

Ronald Reagan rode a wave of conservative promises to the White House in 1980. With the launch of the "Just Say No" campaign promoted by First Lady Nancy Reagan, mandatory minimums and racial sentencing disparities proliferated. Widespread workplace urinalysis testing arose in the 1980s, further putting pressure on communities of color as jobs were lost, income obliterated and children removed from families due to a failed drug test or a weed possession charge. As funding for the drug war skyrocketed, even public schools began to embed police and practice urinalysis screening. The so-called school-to-prison pipeline that haunts some Black and Brown communities to this day is due in large part to the unjust cannabis policies and overpolicing that targeted those communities.

So how do we right these wrongs now?

"The fight is trying to clean the American house of this evil infection called racism that is the root cause of everything from drug wars to a lack of ownership in the legal cannabis industry, or any other industry," says Freddy.

Today Black Americans own just 4 percent of the legal cannabis industry, while whites own 81 percent. Those in the cannabis business have a moral obligation to commit to social equity (not least because that aligns with the values the plant teaches us). Given the gross injustices of the past, Black and Brown people must be empowered in the legal cannabis industry to have ownership, equity and wealth created for and by themselves. This is the true promise of cannabis law reform.

Kassandra Frederique, executive director of the Drug Policy Alliance, put it simply in Grass Is Greener: "The solution has to be more comprehensive than the damage that has been done."

Most importantly, social equity represents a sacred promise that our industry must keep to right the wrongs of the past and begin to heal the inequities that permeate our society. That promise cannot be kept until more people of color attain positions of power and ownership in the legal cannabis industry.

Cannabis prohibition was really just a war on people of color, another way to rob them of opportunity and justice.

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